

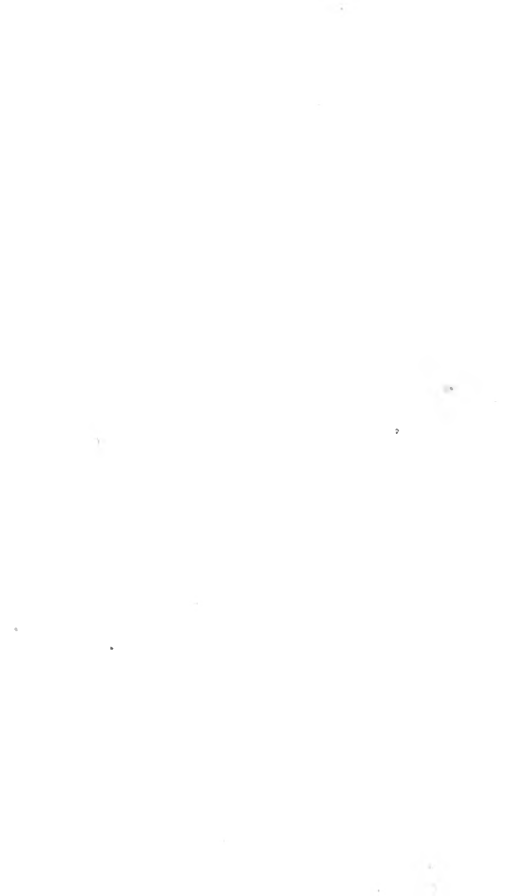


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LOS ANGELES







Frontispiece.—Blind Amos.

# THE ARREST.



From behind the fence a dark lantern gleamed, and a rude hand  
was laid upon his shoulder.

p. 63.

# BLIND AMOS

AND

## HIS VELVET PRINCIPLES.



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# CONTENTS.

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I. BLIND AMOS, AND HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER MELLY .....	7
II. TRY THE VELVET PRINCIPLE.....	15
III. THE THREE BLACK THREADS.....	23
IV. THE VELVET SLIPPERS.....	42
V. DON'T FRET.....	52
VI. HOW VELVET LAID HOLD ON RED-HOT IRON....	61
VII. HOW BLIND AMOS WENT TO THE PRISON, AND HOW HE PREACHED HIS VELVET SERMON.....	82
VIII. LIKE VELVET, SOFT AND FIRM.....	94
IX. COTTON VELVET.....	102
X. VELVET IN ARMOUR.....	112
XI. TAKE CARE OF THE HELM.....	123
XII. THE GOOD GIANT AND HIS VELVET GLOVES....	135



# BLIND AMOS.

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## I.

### *Blind Amos, and his Grand-daughter Melly.*

ONE would not think that blindness was likely to make a man more cheerful than other people. But I have often noticed that, so far from being more morose and melancholy and ill-tempered, the blind very frequently seem to be very happy people. How often have I seen them sitting in the sunshine, and, although the light could bring no vision to their eyes, yet what a serenity, what a glad, sunny feeling, appeared to be spread over their faces! I have sometimes thought that the eyes were closed on those objects which bring irritation and care to most of us, and that so their spiritual eyes—the eyes of their understanding—were more clearly opened to perceive those lovely and tranquil

scenes of perfect blessedness which calm the spirit with "the joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I know this was the case with happy Amos,—blind Amos,—old Amos Blake, who lived in our village, and was, of all our villagers, perhaps, the most uninterruptedly cheerful. Who ever saw him out of temper? Who ever heard a single harsh word trip over his lips? He lived in a pretty little cottage on the edge of Warley Common, and he had lived there nearly all his days. Most persons pitied him at first, and often wondered how he lived at all in his loneliness; but when they came to know him better, the wonder soon ceased, and the pity too. Amos had long before lost his wife, but with him, in his cottage, resided his cheerful grand-daughter, Melly,—as bright-eyed and light-hearted a girl of twenty years old as I ever knew. I think you would not have called them poor,—the pretty, little, neatly-furnished cottage did not look poor,—and I am sure in this world's wealth you would not have called them rich. Indeed, old Amos knew where to find a few shillings a week; then the cottage and the bit of ground were his own; and sometimes Melly went out and did a day's sewing

at a neighbour's, and by this means obtained for herself the little money she needed. Then they were very frugal and economical; and, although you could hardly believe it, Amos did all the gardening himself for his little plot of ground. He and Melly, that is, managed it between them, for I do not think he could have got on very well without her help; and so the long and short of it is, or was, a happier couple never lived in our village. She looked like a very bright April day without its showers, and he like a very bright December day without its sleet and snow.

They had a lodger in their house, though, without whose help neither of them could have been so happy. This third person had a most wonderful way of saying to both Amos and Melly the very things most likely to make them cheerful. He always sat down with them morning and evening, and spoke to them both frequently during every day. When Amos was alone, he came and sat and talked with him; and when Melly went out to work, he would call in and speak with her, and make her heart often thrill with the thought of his love and goodness to a poor, friendless cottage girl. Now, I dare say you wonder who this

lodger was, and what was his name. It was JESUS.

Beautiful little cottage! So simple and happy-looking at all times,—its pretty little beds of flowers before the door, and its jessamine and honeysuckle twining round the windows. Melly loved her flowers. They were almost the only companions she had,—certainly they were her most intimate companions. And then it is very delightful to have something to water, and tend, and look after in the spare moments of time. And although she paid all attention to her grandfather, and read to him many a chapter of Holy Scripture and many a book, still she had moments, and hours too, when he did not need her; and at some such times you might find her watering her beds, training her flowers against the wall, or propping up the pinks and sweet-williams and convolvuluses; for I can assure you she had quite a rich collection of flowers,—fuschias and verbenas and calceolarias. Though I do not know that she laid out much money, either, on them,—as, indeed, she had but little to lay out; but most of our villagers loved her, and she had, as her love was known, many a little present of flowers. I know that our clergy-

man's wife sent her down, one spring, seeds enough and sprigs enough to stock her whole garden; and I believe she has regularly contributed to Melly's garden annuals ever since. It was a beautiful cottage, and a beautiful garden; but I am sure it seemed to me always most lovely because I believed that Amos and Melly loved Jesus. For no house is lovely where He does not live; and I know that Melly, in the midst of her garden, her roses and lilies and plants, thought often of her Infinite Friend who was called the "Rose of Sharon," the "Lily of the Valley," the "Plant of Renown."

I have said that Amos was blind. Did you ever notice that often people who are blind have the lost sense made up to them by extraordinary acuteness in another,—usually in hearing or in feeling? Amos had a truly wonderful sense of touch: his sensibility was most exquisite; there appeared to be some mysterious communication between him and a person or a body before they had actually touched him. He knew any person again, after they had spoken to him once, by touching them. They need not speak. Touch was his eye, his ear: I think it was tasting and smelling to him

too. And it was from this peculiarity of blind Amos that there arose that circumstance in his mental character which determined me to write this little history of him. He could not see. How do you think he made up the pleasure of the deprived sense to himself? Why, by sitting still and rubbing his fingers over a piece of silk velvet. It was his great delight, his chief sensual pleasure. In any company it was a luxury if he could press his finger against any part of a velvet dress. If I had on a velvet waistcoat, he would beg as a favour to be allowed to pass his finger over it. It communicated a pleasure to his whole frame. And, what seems more wonderful, it communicated ideas and sensations to his mind, till at last all things were tried by a sort of velvet standard,—were reduced to the velvet principle: velvet became in his mind his mode of judgment of men and things. The softness of his favourite substance harmonized well with the gentleness of his own mind. It was only his mode of expressing his love to God when, speaking of his goodness to him, he said, “Yes, he has placed me in a beautiful velvet world.”

Thus he regarded every thing from his sense



of touch. He was cut off from the images and figures and suggestions of the external world of light, and so he referred every thing to feeling. He had, too, a number of proverbs which he was in the habit of bringing forth on various occasions. When any one meditated any act of retaliation for any injury, either real or imaginary, he would say, "*Well, if you are determined to kick, be sure and put on your velvet shoes.*" If any words of anger were about to be uttered, or if any message of anger were to be sent, he would say, "*You had better put it up in velvet.*" Sometimes he would say, "*A velvet whip breaks no bones;*" or, "*Wheels that run over velvet make no noise.*"

He was, as you will see, a happy and most genial old man. Divine grace had done much *in* him, and much *for* him. His temperament was happy and sunshiny, and, in addition to his natural temperament, the divine Spirit had wrought in him such a contented mind, such tranquillity and obedience to the divine will, that it seemed as if, even while lying under such a sad cloud as the entire loss of sight, his life was nevertheless perfectly cloudless. I never heard a murmur escape him. Doubtless

he had his battles within; for life is a battle-field, however we may pass it, and some have to fight the battle most within themselves, and others most without. Some find the battle-field most in the heart, and others find it most in the world. However, blind Amos on wintry and cold and rainy days sat by his fireside, and in cheerful summer-times sat most frequently outside his cottage-door. But some part of every day was occupied either in feeling his velvet or talking over his velvet lessons.



## II.

*Try the Velvet Principle.*

I SHALL never forget the first time I heard blind Amos talk. It was one fine evening, and a number of us boys had been merrily playing on the green, until, as is not unfrequently the case with the games and amusements of this world, in our childhood and in boyhood,—type of after-life,—the play had ended in a quarrel, and I am afraid there were some indications of a fight brewing among some of us.

We were not far from Amos, who was sitting at his little garden-gate. He called to us, and began to talk in this way:—"Boys, you have had a good long game, and it will soon be time for you to go home; but, before you go, I have one word to say to you, and especially to the two of you I heard speaking so angrily just now:—I fear you were going to

fight. Recollect *always, before you begin to fight, to put on your velvet gloves.* When I was a boy,—I was not blind then—I remember it was just such an evening as I think this must be,—I and a number of my playmates—all gone now,—I know not where—had rambled through the woods and fields, till, quite forgetful of the fading light, we found ourselves far from home. We found we had lost our way. It did so happen that we were nearer home than we thought; but how to get to it was the question. By the edge of the field we saw a man coming along, and we ran to ask him. Whether he was in trouble or not I do not know, but he gave us some very surly answer. Just then there came along another man, a near neighbour, and, with a merry smile on his face, ‘*Jem,*’ said he, ‘*a man’s tongue is like a cat’s: it is either a piece of velvet or a piece of sand-paper, just as he likes to use it and to make it; and, I declare, you always seem to use your tongue for sand-paper.—Try the velvet, man! Try the velvet principle!*’

“I did not think then—I could not know—what velvet was to be to me in after-life; but I never forgot the good-humoured smile, the

good-tempered tongue, of that man; and I have often thought, when I have heard angry words rising, and have sometimes heard blows struck, that things would have gone on far better if the velvet principle had been tried.

“When I was apprenticed, there was a lad apprenticed with me who tried all my patience and power of endurance. He took a strange dislike to me; he annoyed me in every way he could. I was very passionate, and many a sharp and angry expression would come nearly to my tongue; but I prayed for grace to control my temper, and I often muttered to myself, ‘Now, Amos, try the velvet.’ Sometimes the sand-paper got the best of it; but I always found that, while it exasperated and broke the skin, it did no good to me,—it did not make my life a bit more quiet. Every angry word left me more unhappy than before. I invariably said to myself, ‘Why did you not *try the velvet principle?*’

“In the town where I was apprenticed, I knew a couple when I was nearly out of my time; and what an unhappy life they led, to be sure! They lived in our street. I do not say they came out into the street to wrangle, but everybody knew how unhappy their lives

were. The name of the woman before she was married was Fife, and, when her temper was very much vexed, her husband, I remember,—a most provoking fellow,—would sometimes come and stand at the street-door and ask the neighbours to ‘come and listen to his fife,’ and inquire of them if they ‘did not admire the sound of that fife.’ And very funny, I dare say, it was that he should say so; but I know that it always irritated his wife the more. Then sometimes she would take up the sand-paper; and when she began, I remember, she was quite a match for her husband. She would ask him if his temper did not want a poultice,—if he had recovered from the tongue-ache,—if she should get him a little tincture of nettles. They were the talk of the whole neighbourhood. I used to hear them and think about the sand-paper and the velvet very often. I knew that one or the other would have been soothed and lulled by a kind word or two, and I saw that a kind word would have prevented the whole quarrel; and I used to think and say, ‘Why, they would begin life again with quite a new, everlasting honey-moon if they would only *try the velvet principle.*’

“ Then I became, I hope, a Christian, and I found that the Christian’s ‘ feet were to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.’ I found that the Christian, wherever he went, was to carry the spirit of peace, a loving heart, and a loving life; and I found, too, that the love of God in the heart is the only thing which will conquer the temper or the tongue, or make the ‘ speech’ to be, as the apostle said, ‘ always with grace, seasoned with salt.’ But I do think that after I became a Christian I had more trials and infirmities of temper than before. I had a greater conflict with self, for I had more to live for: but every day, as I arose in the morning and went to bed at night, I used especially to pray that God would dwell in me by his love through Jesus Christ, and that he would make me more loving to others, and that thus I might be able to carry out my favourite *velvet principle*.

“ The best men sometimes get into trouble. The minister of our parish did something—I forget what—that created a strong feeling against him. I do not know now whether he was right or wrong. I fancy he was right; for he bore a good deal of persecution with a

meek and quiet spirit. He went about from house to house in the parish, apparently not heeding any of the remarks about him. Indeed, I know there were no grounds for saying any thing against his character; and he behaved, I remember, in so gentle and loving a manner that in a month or two he won all hearts to him again. I have no doubt it was a severe struggle; but he conquered. He conquered himself, and he conquered the village. I remember how much I admired him, and how gladly I beheld an illustration of my favourite doctrine. It was a perfect triumph of *the velvet principle*.

“When I came to live in this village, and to follow my occupation here, I found many of my neighbours did not like me. I do not know why. I never went to the public-house. I did not associate much with other people. I was thought to be above my station in life. I had innumerable sins of pride laid at my door. I lost many shillings, and in consequence of this cruelty I often, with my poor wife, passed a whole day with nothing to eat or to give to our children. Sometimes I thought I must leave the place; sometimes my faith began to fail: but God enabled me to hold on fast and



firm. I determined to say nothing myself. I have always said, 'Boys, if you will let a lie, or any other bad thing, alone, and not fight it, or kick it, or handle it, it will rot and die at last;' and so I found it. The good opinion of my neighbours came quite as unexpectedly and undeservedly as their censure. But I attributed the change to my following up my attachment to the *velvet principle*.

"Well, my dear boys, I dare say I have talked to you so long that you have quite forgot what you were going to quarrel about; and I am sure you are very glad that I stopped you in the midst of the quarrel, and you will thank me, if you are wise boys, for having prevented you from giving way to bad tempers. Now, recollect that in the long run *gentleness is the truest strength*. I know it will not seem so at first: there seems to be a good deal more power in a blow than in a kind word, and much more power in an unkind look than in a kind one. But it is not so. Gentleness is the truest force. What does the Bible tell us is to lead the lion, the leopard and the wolf? Why, a little child:—'A little child shall lead them.' The most weak and innocent thing you can think of shall lead the most cruel and savage creatures.

“When I was a boy, I remember hearing of a little girl who had an ornament given to her by a good being. Some people said it was a fairy-gift. The ornament was so valuable that nothing on earth could buy it. And it was invisible, although it was always worn. The relations and friends of the girl could not make out what ornament the good being could have left. It was not gold, nor a diamond, nor a precious stone of any kind. At last it turned out that the ornament was a ‘meek and quiet spirit,’ by which every thing she did was to turn into gold and every thing she said was to turn into good. My boys, this is an ornament that God alone by his Spirit can give to you. But, if he gives it, you will never give way to evil dispositions, nor be disposed to fight, but in all your affairs of life *you will try the velvet principle.*”

## III.

*The Three Black Threads.*

I REMEMBER one fine morning there had been some disturbance in our school-room, for we had been quarrelling the night before, and our old master had taken up the quarrel in the morning in a rather unpleasant manner for some of us. But I fancy it was by some arrangement of his that, at a painful and critical moment, into our school-room came old blind Amos. Heartily glad we were to see him, for it was yielded to him as a kind of right that all canings and floggings vanished on his approach, and we knew that he would be sure to speak to us, when we should certainly be entertained by a number of his stories and sayings; and so, truly, in a few moments he began:—

“‘LITTLE CHILDREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER.’  
You have all read of the Apostle John, and

know that he was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' and how he wrote more than any other of the apostles about love. When he was a young man, he was called, like Mark, a 'son of thunder,' and you know he and another disciple came to Christ and asked him to call down fire from heaven on some Samaritans who they thought were doing wrong, and Christ rebuked them and told them they 'did not know what manner of spirit they were of;' but he leaned on the breast of Jesus and learned of him, and became like him; and in his old age he saw that a loving spirit is the best of all possessions, and he never was weary of saying to his friends, 'Love one another.'

"It is said that when John became a very old man, so very old and infirm that he could scarcely speak, he stood in the midst of the people and stammered out, as well as he could, 'Little ch-il-dren—love—one-another.' The last Sunday he spent on earth—whether this account is true or not, it would be very much like him—he could not even pronounce his usual favourite words, but he got partly through them, and said, in trembling, stammering tones, 'LITTLE—CHILDREN—LOVE—LOVE.'

“My dear children, there is nothing like love. But perhaps if I ask you what love is, you will be unable to tell me. Some people have told me it is gratitude; but it is more than that, because we must love many people to whom we cannot feel any gratitude,—people who have never done us any good, but, on the contrary, evil. Some people have told me love is sympathy; but it is more than that: you must love bad people,—people with whom you have no sort of sympathy. Sympathy is fellow-feeling; love is more than benevolence,—more than kindness: it is the constant desire, for Christ’s sake, to be and to act like Christ,—to do to each other as Christ did to us.

“I often think that human nature would be soft, beautiful and smooth as velvet, but for *three black, coarse, ugly threads* which sin has woven into the very grain of it; and you will never love one another so long as you continue to weave these black threads into your life. *The first black thread is* THOUGHTLESSNESS. A great many unkind words are spoken, and unkind deeds done, not so much from intention as carelessness. People do not think. I have read among the fairy-tales of an old woman who never opened her mouth but out jumped a toad,

or a snake, or a leech. We should think such an old lady a very disagreeable companion to sit down to tea with; but all persons who carelessly tell stories calculated to do their neighbours harm, who indulge in scandal and in mischief-making, are like the old woman in the fairy-story; and when I go from house to house, and hear this bad tale and the other,—although I cannot see the person who tells me,—I say, as each sad story is told, Ah, there goes a toad, there goes a snake, or there a leech is sure to draw blood. The wise man spoke of a madman, who flung about fire-brands, arrows and death, and said, Am I not in sport? The careless slanderer is just such a fire-brand flinger. *When there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceases*; and most tale-bearers are thoughtless persons, whose mischief is done not so much out of wilful wickedness as careless idleness.

“I knew a man once—I have known many such men, but this man I especially remember—who had nothing to do. He walked every day over the village, looking into the business of everybody. He picked up one story and carried it to this house, where it received some additions, and it was then carried to another. He had nothing to do but to travel about in this

way, and he never thought of doing any harm; but the mischief was, he never thought of doing any good. There was a poor girl in the village who lived with and worked for her mother. Her life was as gentle and as innocent as the flowers in her garden; but this old man thought he had discovered something against her, and he came to me and sat down, and after a little silence he told me what he thought. I knew the poor girl well. I knew her piety and her purity of life. But I heard his tale out; and then said I, 'Peter, how far do you mean to let that toad travel?' 'Toad!' said he: 'what toad?' 'That toad,' said I. 'Don't you see that that story you have just told me is an ugly, black toad? It will never do to let it go sprawling and crawling over our village. Pretty work, indeed! So, Peter, let's kill it here at once.' And we did. I never heard the story mentioned again: and I believe I did the careless old gossip some good; for, often when he began to talk to me, or tell me a tale, I would say to him, 'Peter, no more black toads, I hope.'

"Yes, my lads, thoughtlessness spoils and defaces the beautiful velvet of life. I said it was the black thread in it, the coarse grain in

it. You would save yourself from doing a great deal of evil if you would ask, before you do any thing, what it is you are going to do; and it often happens to you, and to much older people, that you do evil almost unintentionally because thoughtlessly, and then do evil to support yourselves in the evil you have done already. A good many people act as John Webster did with his cow. He did not mend his hedge: so the cow got out, and got into the pond; whereupon John mended his hedge, but he was so angry with the innocent cow that he actually tied her to a stake in the middle of the field. The cow acted sensibly enough: it was John Webster who was to blame; and so he sought to mend his own negligence by his cruelty. Children, love one another, and, that you may do so, be thoughtful. Remember, others have feelings as well as you. *If your tongue is a spur, it may make somebody kick. If you sow nettles in your throat, don't let them grow outside of your tongue.* In a word, that you may love one another, think before you speak.

“*The second black, coarse thread in the velvet of life is PASSION.* Many a blow has been struck, many a word has been said, many a



deed has been done, and the speaker and the doer would have given nearly their all to have recalled them, but it was impossible. Passion has made foes of the best friends. Passion has darkened the windows of many a heart and many a home. *Passion, my boys, is the gunpowder of life*; and it often does for a life what gunpowder does with a magazine,—lays it in ruins in a moment. *Even things well to be done are not done well in a passion.* If a thing will bear doing, it will bear reasoning about. But passion never reasons. Passion is usually blind. When I was a lad I knew two men,—prudent, kind, respectable men ordinarily. They had some dispute about a mere trifle, and parted in high anger. They had to meet one another shortly again, and it was hoped that the dispute might be made up; and it would have been, but one spoke hurriedly, and made, I believe, some slight mistake. The other called him a liar. It was the meeting of spark and powder. His old friend lifted his hand and felled him at a blow, and that blow killed him. He was tried for manslaughter, and he was ruined in character for life; but that was trifling compared with his sufferings, and the recollection that in a

moment of passion and frenzy he had killed his friend!

“Now, that you may love one another, conquer passion; and, if you ask me how, I have no better receipt than this. In the very moment of passion, pray:—

“‘The angry word and angry heart  
Should be my constant care:  
From each I must extract the dart  
By the strong spell of prayer.’

“Passion is madness; and I do not think any of my readers would like to be thought mad. There was a strange and very eccentric man lived once in a village where I spent some time, and not far from him lived one of the most ungovernable men I ever knew, whom we will call passionate George. He wanted to rent a field belonging to the pious and eccentric man, whose name was Burley; but friend Burley was wary and quiet, and he declined having passionate George for a tenant. So one morning he made his appearance at Mr. Burley’s house, full of rage, to ask why he had been refused. In passion and in storm he burst into his room. A passionate man is usually met by passion: quietness makes him feel awkward and not at home. He began

his conversation by some oaths,—to which Mr. Burley replied, ‘If thou art going to talk in that way, I shall leave thee here to talk to thyself. If it is profitable to thyself, thou canst swear away at these walls: thou wilt have just as much pleasure, just as much sin, and it will save me some pain.’

“George was taken quite aback, as we say, when Mr. Burley said, ‘I never intended thee any harm. Just as thou came in, we were about to pray: if you have any thing to talk over with me, it will do thee no harm to stay while we pray; it will quiet me, and thee too.’ Poor George had not calculated on this at all. He knelt quietly down. Here, at any rate, was a man who would not go into a passion with him; and there is no enjoying a fit of passion long alone. He got up and walked away. It was a sort of proverb afterwards that nobody had ever been a match for passionate George but quiet Burley.

“My lads, when a dog makes too free with you, jumps and bounds over you, you say, ‘Down, Nero! down, sir!’ That is what you must say when passion rises:—‘Down, sir!’ I once took a passionate man very much aback by asking him to hold his tongue while he felt

my pulse, or else while I felt his. It is astonishing how efficacious a moment or two of quiet is in the midst of a great storm. When the fit is very strong on you, think how you would appear before the glass, or rather think how you do really appear before God. The greatest of all heroes is he who can rule his spirit in a great storm. So, my lads, I must have you to *take the black thread of passion out of the velvet of life.*

“I said there were three black, coarse threads that spoiled the beauty of the velvet of life; and *the third is SPITE*: that is only another name for hate. Spite is hate in little things, and trifles. Hate is spite in larger things; and it usually happens that those towards whom we have shown any spite we soon learn to hate. Spite is the child; hate is the full-grown and dark-spirited man. Spite begins in the indulgence of dislikings,—sometimes very unreasonable.

“When I was teaching a class, a good many years ago, in a Sunday-school, there was a little, thoughtful fellow who always had his lessons ready and his answers clear and correct, and the third or fourth boy below him in the class was a sturdy little rogue who

never had a lesson ready, and I often found him stealing behind his mates to pinch or strike his steady little school-fellow, and it was only because the works of the one were good and the other evil. I am afraid that there is something in us which prompts us to hate what is morally excellent and to admire what is stubborn and ungentle and disobedient. Take care of this. What is it you hate? And why do you hate it? Do you hate what is better than yourself? Do you hate what is done well? Recollect, we always hate what is unlike ourselves. From the time of Cain down to the present hour, the bad man hates the good man and all his works.

“I cannot tell you all the disagreeable stories about spiteful and hateful people which I have heard or known in my life; but I will tell you three. They are about *three kinds of spite*. *There is envious spite*. You know that the New Testament speaks of ‘*the spirit that lusteth in us to envy*.’ It is very hard to ‘rejoice with them that do rejoice,’ because it requires such an unenvious spirit. I remember hearing of a little girl who went to her Sunday-school, and when she came home her mother asked her what she had done at school; and she, in

the simplicity of her little heart, said, 'Oh, dear mother, I am afraid I have done nothing; for you know there was little Mary Curtis, whose baby-brother was buried this week, and she was so sorry, and she cried so that I cried with her; and I took her hands in mine and kissed her; but it quite took all the lessons out of my head; so that Sarah Miles, who is always behind with her lessons, had them this morning quite perfect; and she was so happy that, although she got more tickets than I did, I was quite glad, and I told her so, and kissed her too.'—'My dear,' said the happy mother. 'you have not said so many lessons, perhaps, but you have fulfilled the apostle's injunction. You have "*wept with those that weep, and rejoiced with those who rejoice.*"'

"But that is not the story I was going to tell you. It is about the spite of envy. Whenever I see an envious man at work against his neighbour's prosperity, he always looks to me like a man who is pulling another's house down to mend his own with the broken bricks, forgetful that by destroying his neighbour's house he has, perhaps, loosened the foundation of his own, and that, at any rate, the bricks of the building he has pulled down are not of

much use to him. '*Envy is rottenness to the bones.*' (Prov. xiv. 30.) *It is not what we have, but the way we use it, that makes us happy.* I don't know how it happened, but so it was, that old Hooper, who kept the village chandler's shop, became envious of old Moses Owen and his family. Old Moses was a day-labourer, and old Hooper called himself a trader; but somehow poor old Hooper—who was, however, not much more than fifty—could never make the two ends of the thread of life meet. And old Moses seemed very quietly to make the ends meet without much trying.

“In the house of old Moses all was neat and nice as a new pin. In the house of old Hooper I recollect once seeing the cat playing with a shawl and bonnet on a chair; and the idea occurred to me directly that she it was who kept the house in order, for every thing looked in a most lively state of confusion. There were plenty of children in both families, but those of Hooper grew up in idleness, those of Moses in order and diligence. Hooper and his family minded everybody's business but their own; Moses and his family minded nobody's business but their own; and, in the long run, this makes a great difference. Well, the two

families became rather conspicuously noticed in the village, and old Hooper fixed people's attention, and gave them occasion to remark his own constant spite against poor old Moses. I am sorry to say, old Hooper made a great profession of religion. And, although he had a heart as black as a coal, he wore what he called a white neckerchief: he called it white, though white it never had been since it left the draper's shop. At last he got it into his head that he would try to do two things. He thought, foolish man, that he should succeed better if he lived where Moses lived; and he bade a higher rent for his cottage, and he worked very skilfully to get the old man dismissed, by a young master, from his employment. And now everybody thought old Moses would come to the workhouse, or break stones on the road. Well, what do you think? To the very house where old Hooper lived, old Moses went, helped by his children, whom he had not taught the way of industry and piety for nothing. He set up a little shop himself. Poor old Hooper got worse and worse; for '*Envy slayeth the silly one.*' (Job v. 2.) His children got worse and worse too. At last he left the village, and I don't know where he went; but



I met him the day before he left. I never like to speak unkindly to men in their fallen fortunes; but I could not help saying to him, 'Hooper, those bricks did not do.' He did not know what I meant, and said, 'What bricks?' 'The bricks of old Moses Owen's cottage!' said I. 'You left your house to pull down his, and now, you see, you are out of house and home, and you cannot use the bricks to build another.'

"Take care of the black thread of spite. There is an old proverb that says, '*Curses, like little chickens, come home to roost.*' There is a boy here, named Tom Battersby, who has a black eye, I am told, by a ball bounding back and striking him. Take care, boys: every blow you strike another bounds back with just the same fury on yourself. *In the long run, God always does good to them that do good.* How it ought to hold back our hands from evil to know that '*all evil-doers shall be cut off*'!

"Now I will tell you another story. The second spite is the spite of *revenge*. Revenge is folly; it is madness. If any one has done you any harm, it won't do you any good to do them harm in return. A young man once in-

sulted Socrates, the great Grecian philosopher, and went so far as even to kick him; but Socrates walked on and did not heed it,—at which his friends were surprised. ‘What,’ said he, ‘would you have me do? if an ass kicked me, would you have me to kick him again?’ Which answer of Socrates was so much talked of, that always afterwards the young man was called the Kicker. But in this reply of the wise man there was a sort of revenge. It did not come up to Christ,—who, ‘when he was reviled, reviled not again.’

“And oh, my boys, think how dreadful is that feeling of revenge. The man who has indulged in these evil passions may easily be known. Revenge is like a branding-iron, and it burns its fiery traces upon the face of the passionate and the wrathful man. ‘If thy enemy strike thee, strike him again:’ that is what self says. ‘*If thy enemy hunger, feed him:’ that is what Christ says.* When you come to know life, you will see the man who indulges in revenge. His dark, blood-shot eyes and cruel face betray his disposition. Such a man injures himself more than his foe. How much better is it to be

‘Sinned against than sinning!’

“Never injure because you have been injured. There is a fable that a rat once did an injury to a lion, and when the lion walked majestically on without revenging the insult, the jackal, and the tiger, and the panther, all called the lion coward. Whereupon the lion set up such a roar of laughter as made the desert shake again and all the beasts to tremble. ‘No,’ said he, ‘I am not a coward; but you might think so if I thought so much of the tooth of a rat as to revenge it by a blow from the paw of a lion.’ The noblest natures never stoop to revenge.

“I am come to my last tale, and that is to illustrate the spite of *disappointment*. Some people get into so bad a state of mind, that their hatred is not against any thing in particular, but against all things and people in general. And I must admit that disappointment sours the spirit very much; but then *sour apples won't make sour apples sweet*. Love is a great cure for disappointments. Don't expect much, then you won't be disappointed. Don't calculate on any thing on this earth but the love of God,—and even of that, don't be disappointed if sometimes you cannot tell how it works. Sometimes, even, it is as

sweet as a rose, and sometimes as sharp as a surgical knife. Before we become angry from our disappointments, we should ask what right had we to be disappointed. I met a man going along the road; I thought I knew him by his step.

“‘How is it with you this morning?’ said I.

“‘Oh,’ said he, ‘very bad indeed. I have been to old Brooksbank, to ask him to lend me some money. Do you think he would do it? No,—not he. I’ll tell you what it is, Amos, I’m sick of the world: so much friendship as he had expressed for me, and now not to lend me a little money!’

“‘But stop, stop,’ said I: ‘what right had you to expect he would lend it? It may not be convenient. He may respect you, and yet not be disposed to run the risk. You see, you indulged in foolish expectations, and now you are disappointed; and he might say, “Ah! I thought William was a decent fellow. I did not expect that he would put me to the painful disappointment of refusing him this money.”’ It will, my young friends, exalt your love if you reduce your expectations. Human nature is poor even in the best,—even

in those who are converted. And now I have nearly done.

“The other day, a man spoke so crossly in my hearing that I said to him, ‘I think *you must have drunk a great deal of crab-apple wine—and it has almost intoxicated you.*’ He did not like it. Let us, in speech, in action, in character, love one another.

“Some of you go to one church, and some to another. When you go to the church in ——— Street, next Sunday, and you come to that part of the service where there is a beautiful passage in a prayer in which I have often joined,—‘*from envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness, good Lord, deliver us,*’—just think what it means. Envy is the spring, Hatred is the brook, Malice is the river, and Uncharitableness is the sea; and many persons drink of the first, and follow its guidance until they swim and bathe and live in the last. Take care of envy, the fountain, and you shall escape uncharitableness, the sea.”

## IV.

*The Velvet Slippers.*

I THINK you will not have read on so far without finding out that Amos was fond of a good, long talk. Nobody ever heard him disputing. He was not fond of talking with proud or knowing people; but he loved to talk to children, and either in twos, or threes, or twenties, or fifties, or hundreds, he seemed equally at home. He had an inexhaustible stock of stories and sayings; and so he was not a whit more fond of talking to the children than the children were fond of hearing him talk. I was at his house very often. But I remember one night, in the deep winter-time, about Christmas, he asked our old school-master to bring down the six best boys to have tea with him—a great honour—and to spend the evening. I remember how cold and clear the night was; the snow spread over the

whole ground, and sparkled brightly in the moonlight; the ice hung from the roofs of the houses, and the snow was lying like wool upon the branches of all the trees. We came to the cottage,—bright, snug, warm and very comfortable; there was such a fire! and blind Amos never invited us without recollecting that we were boys, and Melly and he always had something very nice to please our young palates. The evening passed along very pleasantly.

After tea he took each of us in turn by the hand, and inquired whether we excelled in reading, or writing, or arithmetic, and said something to us as he took our hand in one of his and laid the other on our head. This evening, some one said to him, "I dare say, Mr. Blake, these youngsters would like to hear one of your stories."

"Very well," said Amos; "and what shall it be about?" And one little fellow, somewhat bolder than the rest, who knew what his way was, said, "Something about velvet, sir." That pleased Amos: so he said, "Well, then, I'll tell you the story of

#### THE VELVET SLIPPERS.

"But you must remember it is only a story.

Once upon a time, there was a little girl living in a village like this, and there came to her a man of a very venerable appearance and offered to her one of three things which he set before her. One was a book, by which she was to understand all things, all mysteries, all knowledge, and all sciences. Another thing was a wand, by which she would be able to compel implicit obedience everywhere,—from everybody to her in every thing. But the most remarkable of all was a pair of velvet slippers, which if she put on, she was to carry peace everywhere as she moved. All disorder, all noise, were to fly before her. She was to bring quiet into every family in which she entered. And she was so sensible that, without thinking a moment about the other two, she chose for the present from the old patriarch the velvet slippers. She was wise enough to see that knowledge and power are of little value without peace.

“As soon as she put them on, she seemed as if walking on the wind, she moved over the earth so noiselessly. She did not hurt her feet as she moved along; and it seemed as if all things made way for her as she moved: nothing resisted her. The velvet slippers were



like a second instinct to her. It is true that wherever she went peace went with her; but *the slippers told her what to do*. If it was unwise to go into a certain house, the slippers nipped her feet as a hint not to go. Sometimes she was about to speak, but the slippers gave a nip, as much as to say, 'Hold your tongue;' and so she held her tongue. Her face was always bright and kind, but she made no more noise than a rose makes in growing. Old Agnes Pepper, the postman's wife,—the most notorious old gossip in those parts,—left off in the very middle of a scandalous story, and hobbled, grumbling, away, if she saw her coming down the street. Old Tom Punshon, who never opened his mouth without an oath, put on quite an amiable face, and said, 'Good-morning, ma'am,' as he saw her approaching. But, what was most remarkable, Jack Welsby, who behaved so badly to his wife, after the velvet slippers had crossed his threshold two or three times, was seen taking his wife out to church; and a few nights after I heard him and his wife, in their rough way, actually singing a hymn by the fireside!

"You have no idea what a deal of good that pair of velvet slippers did to the village.

Somehow, everybody seemed to be smitten with the idea of minding their own business; there was less beer drunk by a great many gallons, and the Red Dragon tavern was almost without a customer. Old Mr. Wurley, who was called 'The Parish Newspaper,' seemed now never to have any news to tell,—although he always had something pleasant to say. Miss Glibby, at the grocer's shop, now never served out scandal with the sugar and tea. There was a great deal less evil seen, and infinitely less heard of,—and all through this pair of velvet slippers. It was not so much what the young lady who wore them said, that kept the people in awe: it was what she did not say. Story-tellers, if they were making mischief, felt that there was a sort of quiet, uncomfortable power in her mild eyes. All scandal seemed to her like a shower, or a mist, on a bird's wing: it never entered into her; she shook it off, and went on her way forgetful of it. She healed a great number of family disputes, but she usually did it<sup>d</sup> by saying nothing, but simply going to the house and filling it with her spirit. Until she came, the minister of our parish was rather harsh and censorious, I thought, in some of his sermons; but, when

she came, he preached the first Sunday a sermon so full of peace, that, as he left the pulpit, I very narrowly looked at his feet, to see if he had not borrowed the VELVET SLIPPERS.

“ Now, I’ve told you what sounds very much like a fairy-tale ; but there is a sense in which it is every word true. One of the most decided proofs of a holy nature is the disposition and the power to produce peace wherever you go. The world is one great scene of turmoil and war ; there are wars in families,—wars in nations,—wars in villages,—and wars in the heart ; and in the midst of all this *the Christian* is to go with peace. He is to be a peace-maker. *His life is a walk and a conversation ;* and in the walk which he is to pursue, *he is to make ‘straight paths for his feet,’ and to see that they are shod with the Christian’s slippers, ‘the preparation of the gospel of peace,’* (James iii. 18.) The Christian is to sow the seeds of peace that he may get the fruits of righteousness. *‘The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.’* A man will be a Christian just so far as he has peace within him. He will not be able always to command peace without him, because offences will come, and there are many

to whom the very peace of his own nature will be an irritation and an offence. There is nothing more annoying to a passionate and envious man than the spectacle of peace in the man he envies; and if he can only arouse him to some hasty act or word, how gladly he says, 'Ah! I've stung him at last.' But, if the Christian cannot always command and compel peace around, he will add no oil to the flames of passion and discord; he will use oil not as a combustible, but as an emollient. '*And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance, forever.*' (Isa. xxxii. 17.) And is it not a great thing to be able to say, in the midst of all the wrangling in the world, 'Well, *I* never added to it,—*I* never joined in the cry,—*I* never mixed in the affray. They made a great noise, but *I* never helped them. *I* was in the crowd, and obliged to go through it, but *I* never added to the uproar. The uproar always ceased as *I* came nigh, for they saw *I* did not like it and tried to stop my ears against it?' If we act thus, boys, we will go through the world so quietly that it will be as if we wore *velvet slippers*.

“But the work of some people in the world

is very different from this. They live to make a noise,—to fume and to foam. The story is told of Diogenes, the Cynic, that at Corinth or Abdera,—I forget which,—when the city was in a great turmoil, and people were moving about in great confusion, he went into the city and rolled an empty tub about, that, as he said, they might see that he was not idle. But the tubs rolled about by many people are not so innocent as was that of Diogenes, for they are full of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness; and as their tub rolls they spill these over the city or the village. There is in the world a great deal of wanton mischief-making. I knew an unpleasant person once, who, I believe, assailed and abused an innocent man just because he thought he added to his respectability by it. A black chimney-sweep, fresh from the chimney, ran up against a rich miller, and bragged about it all day. ‘You see,’ said he, ‘this white came off of Miller Jones this morning, as he and I were walking down the street together.’ A little farther on, he said, ‘I can’t bear the look of this white flour on my black jacket: this is what comes of walking with Miller Jones.’ A little farther on, he said, ‘I wish Miller Jones would mind

where he went, and not be so fond of leaving his flour on me.' Meantime, Miller Jones, who had been tempted at the time to give the chimney-sweep a good thwack for his carelessness, had gone home and brushed out the black soot from the neighbourhood of his more honourable flour, and thought no more about it. But it was such an honour to the chimney-sweep to have even had an opportunity of running against a miller, that he abused him for many a day. If a man's character is very low, it seems to him to reflect some credit to rend a hole in the character of a man who stands high. Whenever a man comes to me with the tale of a tattered character, I always say, 'That man has a hole in his coat somewhere.' In the public-house, close by where we sit, do we not know that Black Anthony, who is lazy, drunk, dishonest, a reprobate, unable to maintain himself or wife, yet a young, strong man, is sponging on his father and mother and staining the characters of half the people in the village? So it is that men whose unholy dispositions are their curse seek to sow strife wherever they go; and what a sad thing, to be able only to say, late in life 'Well, I have not done much, but I have

sown a good quantity of nettle-seed, at any rate, and I know it will grow!

“How different the thoughts of that man or woman who is able to say, ‘Lord, I am a poor, weak, wicked creature at the best, but I have sought to be sustained by thy grace, so that I have soiled no character,—been no tale-bearer. I have sought to make peace wherever I have gone, and, remembering how much might be said against me, to have little to say against any one else.’ Thus, instead of having the feet shod with iron, like Black Anthony, how much better to walk through the world IN VELVET SLIPPERS!”



## V.

*Don't fret.*

IT was not only in relation to others that Amos applied his velvet principle: he was very fond of applying it to the various disasters and evils of life. He used often to say to any one who brought him a piece of bad news,—of a bad crop of potatoes or apples, or of a loss of money, or of a piece of unkind treatment,—“ Ah! I'm very sorry to hear it; but *don't fret*. If the cloth is bad, fraying it will only wear it out more quickly. Fretting kills more people than the cholera. Take it quietly. If the physic is nasty, swallow it down quickly; if the road is unpleasant and you must travel it, walk over it as quickly as you can, and lighten the way by singing something cheerful. If there is a dark prospect without, it will not mend it to have another dark prospect within: oil does more good than blows to a creaking



door or a strained leg; when a man fell into the gutter, grumbling never picked him up again; and, whatever evils happen, the Psalmist's advice is good, '*Fret not thyself.*'"

"I shall not very soon forget," said Amos, one day, "a lesson I had when poor Bill Mason fell from the ladder, and was carried home so stunned. You know his married sister lives next door to him, and when they brought him in on a shutter, his wife frightened the poor fellow, and the whole house and neighbourhood, crying that Bill was killed. I dare say it was very bad for the poor thing; but his sister came in, and although she was very much shocked and frightened, still, she was as quiet as a shadow in a house. Till the doctor came in, she eased his pain, applying lotions of water to the inflamed parts. If poor Bill had depended on his wife for a nurse, a long, bad time he would have had of it; but his sister sent his wife in to attend to her own house, and she moved about, never in a bustle and never forgetful. His wife was always crying about her poor husband, and the loss of time, and the small money from his beneficial society; but his sister, while feeling quite as much for her brother's pain, often stopped her short, in the

midst of her cries, with, 'Polly, Polly, *don't fret.*'

"Such fretfulness reminds me of Tom Rawson, when he was a boy, sitting down crying in the lane.

"'What's the matter?' said I.

"'I've lost master's pig,' said he.

"'How came that about?' said I.

"'Why,' said he, 'I was sent to drive it home to butcher Perkins, and I just got up to get one or two of these apples, and the pig was gone; and I've been back and forward ever so far, trying to find it, and I can't, and master 'll beat I so.' Here there came another blubber, and a long string of 'oh, my!'s 'oh, my!'s.

"'Well,' said I, 'you are a stupid little chap. Sitting here won't find the pig.'

"'I've looked everywhere after it,' said he.

"'Not everywhere, or you would have looked in the right place and found it.'

"The apple-tree the young urchin had been gathering fruit from hung over from an orchard across the road; and even while we were talking, I thought I heard, somewhere close at hand, a 'humph! humph!' very pig-like. 'It's my belief,' said I, 'if you had spent as much time in looking after the lost pig as in grieving

Blind Amos.



“What’s the matter?” “I’ve lost mother’s pig,—” p. 54.



over it, you would have found it by this time. Come round here: we shall find a gate open, I believe;’ and it was so.

“‘There he be, sure enough,’ said Tom.

“‘That’s well,’ said I. ‘Now, recollect always that the worst thing you can do, whether you lose a pig or any thing else, is to sit down, pig-like, to grunt over it, when you should be mending the mischief. Do your duty, and *don’t fret.*’

“‘Sometimes our fretfulness is still more unamiable than this. It is not over our own disasters, but over our neighbours’ prosperity. Many people put me in mind of a boy—a school-fellow of mine—who was always crying for what was not his. I recollect the first time I saw him he was crying in the play-ground.

“‘What is the matter?’ said I.

“‘I want his marbles,’ said he.

“‘He had a great bag of marbles of his own, but that was not enough: he pointed to a boy with a large bag of marbles: nothing would satisfy him but those: so he went crying about. He was afraid to play with his own, for fear of losing them, and so he walked about the play-ground and cried, ‘I want his marbles! I want his marbles!’

“What a true type was he of many boys and many men! I have known a rich man unhappy because he could not get the farm belonging to some humble man and add it to his estate. I have known an old lady to be almost ill of a fever because she could not get a little piece of ground from an allotment to add to her garden. I have known a man doing well in business, and making a fortune, not easy until he had prevented some honest family from getting a living at all, by taking it into his already encumbered hands. And when I have seen these things, and a thousand like them, I think, as I go through the streets of the village or the town, that I see thousands of the human family fretting because they cannot get more marbles. ‘What are you fretting for, my little fellow?’ I said once to a little chap, sitting at table with a great slice of plum-pudding before him; and as I spoke to him he blubbered out, ‘I—I—I can’t e-eat any more.’

“Poor little epicure! the fretfulness of millions of people in this world has no wiser origin than this. DON’T FRET. When the winter comes, put on your velvet waistcoat. There is an old proverb which says, ‘*A hun-*

*dred cart-loads of care will not pay an ounce of debt;* and again, *'If the pain is very severe, it cannot last, and if it is moderate, it may be borne;'* *'Black land produces white bread, and heavy trials ought to make the heart tender.'* 'Leave off groaning when trouble comes, and take to praying.' 'Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' 'To fret is only to sow the wind, and that is a seed that will not produce a good crop by itself.'

"I had an old neighbour who was like a knight of a sorrowful countenance; he had no real cause for misery, and I believe that made him miserable. He often tried to get me to pity him; but there are so many objects of real pity in this sad world, that one has no pity to spare for the mere fretters. Sometimes he tried one way, and sometimes another. He would say that he knew he should die in a workhouse.

"'What a mercy it is,' said I, 'you are not in the workhouse already! and what a mercy it is that there is a workhouse to die in! The workhouse is a far better lodging than our blessed Lord had. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but he had

not where to lay his head.' He was just one of those people who wanted you to pat their troubles on the back, and say, 'Poor thing!'

"Some people are as careful of their troubles as mothers are of their babies. They cuddle them, and rock them, and hug them, and cry over them, and fly into a passion with you if you try to take them away from them. They want you to fret with them, and to help them to believe that they have been worse treated than anybody else. If they could, they would have a photograph of their grief, in a gold frame, hung over the mantel-shelf for everybody to look at. And their grief makes them, ordinarily, selfish: they think more of their dear little grief in the blanket and in the cradle than they do of all the world beside; and they call you hard-hearted if you say, *Don't fret*. 'Ah! you don't understand me: you don't know me: you can't enter into my trials.'

"My friend, whom I mentioned, was just of this sort. Soon after I spoke about the work-house, he tried another ground, where, I suppose, he expected sympathy.

"'I often think,' said he, 'I shall get to hell at last.'



“‘Ah!’ said I, ‘what a mercy it is that we are not there already, my dear old friend! What a proof of God’s long-suffering and goodness, and indisposition to send us to hell! What a proof that he desires not the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live! And, truly, if you are in hell at last, God will not be to blame. And again,’ said I, ‘what a mercy, old friend, that even there the Judge of all the earth does right! “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” “Though he slay *me*, yet will I trust in *him*.”’

“‘Ah!’ said he, ‘you are saying things now beyond my depth: I can only think of my poor soul.’

“We sat still a little while. Then said I, ‘Old friend, the winter is coming on.’

“‘Ugh! it is,’ said he.

“‘Now, I’ll tell you what,’ I said: ‘if I were you I would take off that horse-hair shirt. It cannot be comfortable at any time, least of all in winter-time.’

“‘Horse-hair shirt!’ said he. ‘I wear no horse-hair shirt. That is some of your nonsense, Master Amos; that is some of your conundrums and riddles, I know.’ I went on:—

“‘I would, if I were you, take off that horse-

hair shirt, and, if you want to be warm and comfortable, get a nice velvet waistcoat to cover your shivering body. Velvet is as cheap as horse-hair,—cheaper in the end.'

“‘What do you mean?’ said he.

“‘Why, I mean this: *fretfulness is like a horse-hair shirt*. The old monks used to wear these shirts to irritate their irritability. What a device!—studiously seeking out for occasions for making themselves uncomfortable,—like you, who would think something was wrong with the moral government of the world if you could be happy for a day together. Cure yourself of fretfulness. Velvet is nicer for the skin than horse-hair. If you had more faith you would have less fear. If you did more for others you would think less of self. Get rid of your unbelief and your selfishness, and I shall not then have to say, *Don't fret.*'”

## VI.

*How Helbet laid hold on Red-hot Iron.*

THE worst family we had in our village was the family of the Gibbonses. There were in the village more daring and perhaps more hardened sinners, but this family, as a whole, was the worst.

The father was dead. The mother was living with some of the remnants of a better time—when she was respected and respectable—about her. The young men were dishonest. The girls had come to no good. They were a ruined family; and they were rapidly sinking down the steep of vice into the blacker gulf of crime. How they lived was a matter of surmise. It was very well known their life could not be honest. They never did a day's work, and yet they always had money for drink and gambling. Words would be only thrown away

on them. They were very near the end of their tether.

Well, one morning our village was not a little alarmed by the report of a great robbery at Farmer Purton's. Money, plate, and a variety of things were gone. The question now was, who could be the robbers? and there seemed to be a very general idea that there was one family not unlikely to be implicated pretty deeply. Farmer Purton himself stepped along to the house of the Gibbonses. The girls had left, and gone to a town at no great distance, some time before. But of the young men there was no satisfactory account. The old woman, with a tearful sincerity about which there could be no doubt, declared *her* innocence. No one suspected her; but when she began to avouch the innocence of her boys, it was felt that the ground was more doubtful. A rather dark case was soon made out against them, and a warrant taken out for their apprehension. There were two young men and a young lad of not more than twelve or fourteen years. The lad was not included in the warrant, although he too had disappeared with his brothers. Before the day was out, he made his appearance again. He had only been to

the early-morning market of the large town near; but shrewd eyes noticed that he had more money in his pocket than could be picked up, night and day, in a market.

That night he started away again. His steps were carefully followed to a field, in a corner of which he began to dig; and, just as he had laid bare the greater part of farmer Purton's plate, from behind the fence a dark-lantern gleamed, and a rude hand was laid upon his shoulder. Before the morning, he and his brothers were safely lodged in custody. They were hiding at no great distance from the spot. We have little to do with them: the evidence was so clear that they were instantly carried to the county jail.

Little sympathy was felt with them through the village, and little was felt with the poor mother either. But, amidst all the ruin wrought by sin and its overthrow, it was impossible altogether to forget that in one household, by the corner of one emberless fireside, a broken or breaking heart might be found sitting. So by her miserable hearth sat poor widow Gibbons, lonely and desolate. Gossips visited her to inquire, but none visited her to comfort. The neighbours wondered what she

would do, how she could live, where she would go, when she would leave the village, whether she would go to the workhouse. In some kinds of distress the kindness shown by the poor to the poor is most exemplary and full-hearted; but in some others (and especially in distress like this) they exhibit to each other a degree of coarse and unsympathizing hardness truly distressing to see. As to the poor widow, she sat and rocked herself to and fro on a little stool by the fireplace. All her hope seemed to be entirely cut off. She had no earthly rest or trust. Disgrace had fallen like a plague on her and her whole family. She had forgotten God for many years, although once she had been among His people. Thus it seemed as if she had no friend either on earth or in heaven. So she sat and said scarcely a word, after replying to the first gossiping questions, during the whole day. Towards the evening, Amos heard of her and her distress: so he took his old companions (his walking-stick and Melly's arm) and started off to see if he could comfort her. She needed comfort; but where was it to come from? She sat, the picture of stolid, dumb despair, in her miserable room. It was hard, poor old creature.

She might have said, "I have nursed children, and they have rebelled against me." The arms that ought to have been her support and security were the cause of her fall and ruin and misery in her weary old age.

Amos and Melly went in. She did not look up, however, for some time, till Amos spoke in his kindest and most soothing tones, "How is it with you now, poor old friend?" Then she lifted her eyes for the first time for hours.

"I be all the better for seeing you, Mr. Blake, anyhow," she said. "I thought of you several times to-day, and wondered whether you would come to see me." Amos laid his hand on her's, and, after Melly had spoken some kind words to her, he said, "Have you prayed to-day, Betty? I fear you will have forgotten that. Now, I want to talk with you, but it's always best to pray first and talk afterwards, and especially now. *Prayer is good at all times; but prayer is always best at the worst times.*" And then they kneeled down, and old Amos, after some moments of deep and impressive silence, with his hand laid on the cold hand of the poor widow, poured out his heart before God for her and her's. It was a stream of deep, holy, quiet talk

with Heaven. The simple heart of Amos expressed the widow's woes in all his own and in all her simplicity too. How blessed prayer is at such moments, none can know but those who have tried its power.

The poor, stricken, bereft old creature felt the words. They unlocked her soul, and she burst into tears,—tears which relieved and soothed.

While old Amos sat after prayer by the old woman, Melly bustled about, and looked a little after the desolate cottage.

“I dare say,” said Amos, before he left home, “we shall find her in a sad state. Take two or three little things, Melly, to make her comfortable.”

So, while the old couple talked, as I said, Melly gathered some sticks, and brightened and swept up the hearth, and set the kettle on the fire, and looked into the miserable room where old Betty slept, and shook up her bed, and made it, I promise you, more comfortable than it had been for many a day. Then she came down-stairs, and found old Betty's tea-apparatus, and from her little basket which she had brought on her arm she took two or three little comforts, which she hoped would



tempt the poor old creature to break her fast before she went to her sâd and weary bed. Dear Melly! nobody heard her step as she moved about, but before she had been in the house many moments, she had effected such a change! She had put this thing into a corner, she had hung this old shawl on a nail; and, what with a little dusting and sweeping, a bright gleam from the fireplace, and a kettle beginning to sing, the whole room looked, I can tell you, as it had not looked for many and many a day, ay, and month too.

And Amos was playing his part: he knew what he thought, and what he hoped, in the midst of the widow's sorrows; but he did not utter many of his thoughts, nor express, as yet, many of his hopes, except in a very general manner. The prayer he had offered had opened the widow's lips. She was able to talk, and she had found a friend to talk to, and a friend universally beloved and honoured and respected in the village, although in a scale of rank not very much above herself. And thus her tongue was liberated, and she began to talk away freely; and Amos performed the part of a listener, only throwing in an occasional Yes! or No! or Eh? or Ah! Do we

not all know how it eases the heart sometimes to be allowed to talk? Talk is like tears: it helps us to get rid of our sorrows. And the poor, especially, love a good listener,—one who, without replying, will just pay attention to them and take in all their tales and all their grief without interruption.

But Amos wanted to be a true comforter; and people in the circumstances of Betty are generally dissatisfied unless you hold out to them false hopes. She began to talk of getting the boys off. She hoped they would come back again. She could not think they were guilty. No: there was Tom Forbes, and Bill May, and a host of Toms and Bills, who were to blame; but she could not see that her poor boys were so culpable. They might have been trespassers in a small way; but to break into a house to steal,—she could not believe that. They would be acquitted,—they certainly would,—and would come back and lead different lives, and be honest and steady and sober.

Amos was a sound-hearted and real man, and he never could hold out or encourage any false hopes. And he had no mock philanthropy about him,—he had no sentimental sympathy with crime. He did not approve of all, or of

most, of man's methods of punishment; but he believed that punishment for sin was a divine law; and although he did not regard the punishment of revenge as at all divine or as man's province, yet he did see clearly that sin deserves, and must receive, punishment. For poor widow Gibbons he had hearty sympathy. For the two young men, I am afraid he was so hard-hearted as to be very glad that they were stopped. And I believe he was further so hard-hearted as to wish that they might be found guilty on their trial, as beyond all doubt they would be. For the boy, again, he had sympathy; and for the last two or three hours he had been revolving in his mind whether there were no means of saving him. And the question still was, How could it be done? He did not say one word of all this to the unfortunate old mother. He thought he saw in his own mind how this affliction might turn out greatly to the advantage of old Betty; but he said very little to her. He satisfied himself for the present with simply holding his peace and conveying no false hopes. He knew that conviction was certain: so at last he said,—

“I must go now, Betty. I must just tell you, again, that you have forgotten God too

long. 'He hath smitten, he can bind up.' You are no stranger to these things: you know who said, 'When my heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.' It is quite true, all God's waves and billows have gone over you; but I believe 'he will command his loving-kindness in the daytime.' 'Pour out your heart before him.' 'God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.'"

All these words were said so gently and impressively that Betty not only heard, but felt, every syllable. "And now," said Amos, "before I go, (and I must go at once,) I mean to know you have drunk this cup of tea and eaten this little bit of toast; and then I shall think that you'll have another cup and eat another piece after I am gone."

The poor old thing declared she could not touch it; but Amos knew that, although she could not have eaten when he went into the cottage, she had refreshed herself by talking: and Melly brought her a pan of cold water and made her bathe her hands and face;—for during the greater part of the night and all day she had sat rocking herself to and fro by her miserable fireplace.

And so the cup of tea was drunk and the bit of toast was eaten; and when Amos rose to leave, "Don't forget to pray!" said he, with his fingers on the latch.

"No," said she; "and when I do pray, you may depend on it, I shall pray for blessings to rest on you."

That night, in the cottage of the blind man the widow was not forgotten, nor were the prisoners either. The thought of their condition mingled with the prayers of the night. The recollection of their condition mingled with the earliest prayers of the morning, too; and Amos wondered what could be done. He did not wish to avert the punishment from the heads of the two elder brothers. But he thought of the lonely, desolate old woman, with no one to live for, no one to love, no one to cherish, should they all be condemned; and he did long to save her youngest for her. But how could it be done? As to Farmer Purton, —in whose house the burglary had been committed,—he was inflexible because he was stolid. He had acute feelings for all the lower animal wants and gratifications, but was slow in following the more divine and holy instincts of our nature. He was a surly, purse-

proud farmer, alive to all the necessity of revenge, but not to the sacred blessedness of forgiveness. Ordinarily he was like iron, cold and unbending. His passions made him like iron heated to redness; and in such a state he had committed many acts of petty cruelty, which were not forgotten in the village when his name was mentioned. It did not seem as though there was much to be expected from his sympathy; and yet Amos had the daring to believe that he could enlist him, in some measure, in the widow's cause; for, after all, the farmer was not a bad man. He was a hard man,—one of those men who are to be managed with a very gentle bit, principally by letting them have their own way. He had pride, self-will and vanity too,—an awkward mixture to manage; but, like all strongly animal natures, he had considerable timidity when brought into contact with a mind of superior strength.

Well, Amos determined on seeing and laying his hand on this bar of red-hot iron. So, very soon after breakfast, he seized his stick, and started along on his cheerful, thoughtful, lonely way. He was a privileged person. He did not presume on this; but no one ever thought of treating him with less re-

spect than the squire or minister. He was, indeed, usually called Amos; but the respect was a great deal more substantial than in mere verbal compliments. It was shown in regard to his opinions and in deference to his character. He walked into the house at Southfield, and sat down. The farmer little thought of the purpose of his visit, and received him very graciously, and the farmer's wife brought out some gooseberry wine and made him take a glass, with a slice of bread-and-butter.

"We must come to it at last," thought Amos,—"and the sooner the better."

"This robbery is a bad business," said he. But Amos had made a false move. The farmer went off into a violent fit of passion.

"Ay, it is a bad business,—the rascals,—the villains! The only satisfaction I have in the matter is, that they'll all suffer for it, if there's any law to make 'em." And the farmer, his face getting more and more red with the excitement of passion, moved his fingers to and fro, as if he would like to officiate in punishing them.

Amos said they were certainly very bad fellows, and a number of rather sarcastic proverbs came to his tongue, but he commanded

them back again. "I've seen poor widow Gibbons," said Amos. "She is in a wretched way."

"Poor widow Gibbons, indeed!—I am afraid, Blake, you've been going there and coming here with some of your velvet rubbish. I hope not; I hope not; for, if so, the sooner you leave off talking the better."

"Well, farmer," said Amos, "I have come to see if any thing could be done for the widow; and I do think that if any thing is done you must have a very considerable hand in doing it."

"It's all a precious heap of rubbish, Amos,—it's all your velvet rubbish. I won't listen to a word of it,—not a word of it! I'm very glad to see you here,—always glad to see you and Melly to tea, or any thing, any day,—but I won't hear any thing about this infernal pack of robbers and burglars. What is law made for, I should like to know, if they are not to be punished? Who's to be safe in their beds? As to the old woman, she's as bad as they are. Will anybody persuade me that this has all been going on and she know nothing about it? Nonsense! I ought to have had a warrant out for her too, and give her a taste of prison-life. Besides, all the things are not found,





Blind Amos.



And the farmer put his hands in his pockets and began to stride to and fro through the room. p. 75.

and I don't know whether I shall get them back. As to my money, that's gone, gone for good and all; and I suppose you are coming here to persuade me not to prosecute. No, no, Mr. Amos! no, no!" And the farmer, having worked himself up into a high state of passion, put his hands in his pocket and began to stride to and fro through the room.

"You very much mistake the object of my visit," said Amos. "You have not allowed me to say why I have called on you; but I will say at once, that if I could save the young men I would not do it."

"I'm glad to hear you say that much," said the farmer.

"I don't want to know of their being near the village again. I believe they want to learn some severe lessons which a prison only can teach them, and I hope that they may have an opportunity of being what they never will be here."

"I tell you," roared the farmer, "I wish I could have them hung, sir!"

"Well, I don't believe you would if you had your will, after thinking about it two or three days; but, if you could have them hung, it would not be a nice thing to dream about,

Farmer Purton: it would not be a very pleasant thought for your fireside on a winter's night, and on your death-bed. In your last prayers it would not be a very happy thing to be able to say, 'Lord, I come to thee for mercy: I need it very much. I have done little good in the world, but I can say that I got two or three of my fellow-creatures, made in thine image, hung!' But I know you better, Farmer Purton; and I believe you would rather save them than hang them."

"Hang me if I would!" said the farmer.

"I know better," said Amos.

The farmer walked away from the room.

It was between eleven and twelve in the day. The farmer's wife, a notable old body, continued bustling about the room in farmhouse work. She stopped short, and said, "Amos, I must say, although I don't wish harm to a creature under the sun, I am not sorry those vagabonds are caught."

"The way of transgressors is hard," said Amos. "They deserve their punishment; but how few of us meet with our deserts!"

"But," said the farmer's wife, "I do not like the thought of treating the lad severely: he

might mend,—there's no knowing; he might mend."

"Why," said Amos, thankfully, "that is the very thing I want to talk to the farmer about. I don't want to say a word for the young men, but the lad, the lad,—now, I should like to give him one more chance to help his poor old mother. But when the trial is over, supposing the lad should escape, who will employ him. What is to be done?"

"I'll tell you what, Amos: when the farmer comes back he'll be quite different from what he was when he went out; and you must stick up to him, and tell him that he must recommend the lad to mercy and promise judge and jury to take him into his house and employment. I've seen the lad,—there's something to be made of him: you work that screw, and if you don't find me help you now, I will after you are gone: never fear."

"Why, the Lord of heaven bless you in your basket and your store," said Amos; "that's the very thing I wanted to propose myself: it is the only way to save the lad, but I've been afraid to speak it."

"Never fear," said the farmer's wife: "it will be done."

The farmer came back again in a little while, and sat in the chimney-corner. He took up his pipe,—which was a good sign. He asked Amos to take a pipe with him, and Amos did not say nay,—though he did not indulge himself in that foolish and hurtful habit. “Now,” said the farmer, “it’s no use saying any thing more about that affair: I’ll never recommend those vagabonds to mercy; it would not be right.”

“I don’t think it would,” said Amos; “I don’t want you to do it.”

“Then what do you want me to do?”

“I want you to help to save the boy,—the young fellow.”

“He’s as bad as the rest of them. I knew they could not have got into the house but for him: they pitched him over the wall like a kitten; he crept into the house through a hole in the cheese-loft. He’s as bad as the rest of them: they all deserve hanging together!”

Amos was afraid to reply, as a single wrong word might set the whole place in a flame again. But he said, “He’s had a bad training, farmer; those wild chaps might frighten him to any thing. Suppose little Bobby, who

used to sit on my knee, had been born a brother of their's, they might have made him do as they made the boy do."

Little Bobby was in heaven; but he was a great pet of the farmer, his father; so that, although he pretended to be taking something out of his eye, I don't think there was any thing in it but a tear that had somehow wandered to that rocky place; and it is no matter of surprise that the corner of her apron was in requisition by the farmer's wife for the same purpose. But Amos did not see all this, of course,—though he knew that he had touched a tender chord, and that it had served his cause. "So, farmer," said Amos, "you will recommend the lad warmly to mercy; you'll do it as you *can* do a thing when you determine that it shall be done; and, if those reprobate fellows are away, we will try and do something with him. I have been anxious about this, because the trial comes on the week after next. But there's something else I want to say. What is to be done with the lad after? Who is to take him?"

"I don't know," said the farmer. "That's your look-out, Mr. Blake." But the farmer knew what was coming, and when a man like

the farmer does a thing, it is generally not done by halves. "*Forgiveness is sweet wine,*" and when a man takes one glass he generally smacks his lips after a second.

"Farmer Purton," said Amos, "tell the judge and the jury, next week, that you recommend the lad to mercy, because he is the last child of his widowed mother, and she must not be left destitute. Say that you believe—as you most truly may—that he was not so much led to do it as compelled by his elder brothers; and wind up all by saying that you will take him upon your farm, and employ him, if they will liberate him."

Some men who never step out of the way of life to perform a single good or charitable office are at times fairly surprised into a good deed. I believe it was so with Farmer Purton that morning. "I'll do it," said he; "I'll do it, Amos. I'll give you my word I'll do it; but, upon my word, you've been cutting out your yards of velvet, as you call it, this morning!"

The trial came on. The elder prisoners were convicted. The other lad came to Farmer Purton's, and Mrs. Purton watched him like a mother. He grew up a true, honest labourer, and is now a farmer in a small way. The old



widow Gibbons found happiness in her old days. Amos begged for some washing for her, and she did very well with it, and had the happiest home she had known for years. And Amos blessed God for the success which had attended him in the working of his velvet principle.



## VII.

How Blind Amos went to the Prison, and how he preached his Velvet Sermon.

AMOS often went to the jail: it was at some few miles' distance from the village where he lived, but he walked over to it, and all were glad to know he had come. The keeper and the turnkeys liked to hear him talk to the prisoners. The chaplain of the jail always asked him to speak after prayers to them; and to the poor prisoners it was always a pleasant opportunity, for he had something amusing—something new and interesting—to tell. He always gave a number of his stories and proverbs, and brought a smile over the dark place and the dark faces in it. When those poor Gibbons boys were there, Amos went over to see them, and I was privileged to go with him; and the chaplain, as usual, asked him to talk to the prisoners. So he did; and of course he began to talk about velvet. Dear

old Amos could not get on long without a velvet lesson, and he began, "My dear friends, my dear unhappy friends, (for I do not talk to you so much as prisoners,) you have not hurt me, and I am not your keeper, nor a turnkey. I am a poor friend of your's, who would do you all good. I cannot see you, but I know that you are here in different compartments,—men and women, confined for your offences. We are all of one family, and I only speak to you to soothe you,—to comfort you,—to do you good. I should like to produce in you good thoughts and desires: indeed, *I* cannot do it, but God can use me, by his Holy Spirit, so that I shall not speak to you in vain. I have often said to you, I love velvet. You laugh at me, perhaps. I am blind; I cannot see; but I can feel, and I love the touch of it. But, if I could see, I should love to look at beautiful velvet,—beautiful, soft, shining, crimson or purple or black velvet; and if I could hang before your eyes a large, a very large crimson velvet curtain, and with great gold letters upon it, you would all say, How beautiful! Now, there are some texts in the Bible so beautiful to me that they look like that. They are golden letters on crimson velvet.

They are soft, and warm, and bright. I will tell you one that I should like to print so for all the whole wide world to see. It is this: recollect it:—‘GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM.’

“All the Bible is in that text, and all the words of it are velvet words. There is the first, ‘GOD.’ Most of you have forgotten God; but when you think about him, and ask who he is, then you find that ‘GOD IS LOVE.’ How beautiful, when the warm sunshine comes to my face! I feel how bright it is, although I cannot see; and I say, ‘God is love.’ When I feel the soft wind go by me and blow on my cheeks, I feel it so pleasant, and I say, ‘God is love.’ When I sometimes feel very unhappy because I cannot see to read, or look at any of the beautiful things about me, I say, ‘God is love.’ I like to keep constantly running my memory and my mind over that: I know there is a God, and that God is love; and the knowledge that it is quite true enters into my soul, and it is warm on my heart, and I cannot see, but I know that God is love, and that knowledge is worth more to me than many eyes. By it I see things I could not

see with the eyes, nor with many eyes. Yes, my dear suffering friends, God made all things, and 'God is love.'

"But, you will say to me, how is it, if God is love, that there is so much misery in the world? Why, because man has left God,—because he has chosen his own way rather than God's way. Why are you here?—what makes the difference between you and me,—between the people outside the prison and the people in it? Why, is it not that you have done wrong? You have done wrong to your fellow-men; but we have all, all done wrong to God,—for we have all left him and 'turned every one to his own way;' and as 'God is love,' and to be near him is love, we have, by forsaking him, become hateful to ourselves, and so we are 'hating one another.'

"In a very distant country there lived once a great man. He was a very rich person indeed, and had a magnificent house, and large possessions, gardens and parks and fields, and all sorts of beautiful animals, and lovely birds, and kind and dear and good companions. And he had a son, to whom he said, 'All this is thine, my dear son; all mine is thine: go where you will, and do what you

will, you are always safe so long as you are in my grounds. Pluck my fruit, enjoy my fields: they are very wide and very large; there is no fear of your being too confined. But, remember, you must not go out of my gates: if you go out of my gates, there are robbers and wild beasts; there is a dark, wild country; and, my son, those robbers will make you one of themselves, and be very glad to injure me, as they will believe they can do, by making you their prisoner and trying to make you like themselves.'

"And the young man wandered about the grounds, but he longed to see the walls and the gates; he longed to know how large his father's garden was. Many days he went to the gates; and once, as he stood by the walls, he saw one of the robbers climbing up. 'Come to us,' said he, 'come to us: we are very merry out here; come and be merry too.' So the young man left his father's house and park and gardens, and went to live among the robbers. Ah, he soon repented his choice; but then he had lost sight of the gates,—the way was so dark, the country so terrible, so full of beasts and rocks. 'Oh, I am miserable,' said he, 'I am miserable! Oh that I had never

left my father's house!' Was the father to blame because the son was miserable and unhappy? Whose fault was it that he was so? My dear friends, we are all the children of the son who left his Father's house. God was our Father. He made man upright, and then he was happy. But he left his Father's house,—he broke through his Father's gate,—he picked his Father's lock,—and ever since he has been miserable. The whole world is now like the country full of robbers and wild creatures outside the rich man's palace.

“And when the son left his home, whom did he offend? Did he offend the robbers? He offended his father. You are here because you have offended your country's laws. But I want to call your attention away from that. When David did evil, once, he looked up to God, and said, ‘Against *thee*, *thee only*, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.’ He had offended, and grievously offended, man,—as many of you have done,—and deserved to be punished; but it was his sin before God that afflicted him:—‘Against *thee* have I sinned.’ Thus, the misery of the world comes from man's being ‘filled with his own way,’ and not from God's way being one of harsh-

ness and severity. The misery of the world arises from men's having 'left their Father's house' and having 'gone into the far country.'

“‘But,’ you will say, ‘is there any hope for us at all? May we ever get back to our Father's house again?’ Yes. What do the gold letters on the crimson velvet say? ‘GOD WAS IN CHRIST.’ When you were little children, you, all of you, used to read about Christ,—some of you by your father's or your mother's knee, some of you to your teachers at school. But some of you do not know much about him; you never read his life. Well, it's like this: when the good, kind, loving, powerful Father found that his son could not and would not come back to him again, he went outside the great gates of his house to find and to bring back his son. This is what is meant by it. ‘God was in Christ.’ I heard, a great many years ago, of a little child that was stolen from a rich nobleman by some kidnappers: they stole the child for its beautiful and valuable clothes, and they stole it to bring it up in sin and make it just like themselves,—a thief. Well, the nobleman advertised, and searched, and sent messengers about the country, but he could not find his child. At last he thought



he found some trace of him; and what do you think he did? He disguised himself like one of those very thieves; he learned their language; he used their slang; he let his beard grow, and his hair became matted, and he dressed himself in ragged and wretched garments, and fed on their coarse and poor food; for he was determined to save his son. He followed them, he adopted their low-life ways, he saw their sins. He did not go among them to inform against them, or to seek their punishment; he did not go among them to partake of their sins: he went among them to seek and to save his son, and the story tells us that he found him and saved him. 'God was in Christ.' He was seeking to save his children who had fallen into the hands of robbers.

"Christ was in the form of man; he took on himself the form of a servant, he lived among the robbers, but 'he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' 'Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to die for us.' The Jews used to say that there were three kinds of people in the world. Righteous men, just men,—that is, persons who paid their debts and acted honourably, and no more. Then

there were good men,—persons who not only acted honourably, but lovingly; who not merely paid their debts, but who gave to the world tenderness, kindness and love. For such a man some, said Paul, would even dare to die; but God commended his love towards us, in that when we were neither just, nor righteous, nor good, nor loving, Christ died for us. He died for the ungodly. Now, then, for the third of the velvet words:—‘God was in Christ RECONCILING.’ That is to some of you rather a hard word: it means bringing two people together who were enemies; and it is such a beautiful word,—making friends again,—and it is so wonderful, when you try to find out what it means. There is one word you would all like to hear pronounced in your ears. What is the word? Why, Pardon. Well, ‘God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven us.’ There was no other way by which pardon could come. Don’t you see that when once a man has done wrong no doing right can ever mend the wrong? When I was a child, my mother had a very peculiar china tea-cup, which she valued very much, and I was so unfortunate as to break it. Well, it was put together again. It was mended with some cement; but still

there was always the place where it had been broken; and I often saw my mother looking at this place, and I saw it too, and it made me very uncomfortable. So it is with us: some of you have stolen money, and some of you have stolen other property,—clothes, perhaps. Suppose you could go to those whom you have robbed, and say, ‘Here is ten times the value of what I took from you:’ would that mend it? No. It might put together the pieces of broken china, but it could not take away the recollection that you had committed the robbery. Some time ago, I went with your chaplain into one of the cells to see one of your number, who was very ill, and he seemed to be very contrite and sorry, and said, ‘Oh, sir, I have robbed such a good master, I shall never be able to make it up to him.’ ‘When you get out of prison,’ said I, ‘you must try what you can do.’ ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘I never can do it; I shall never forgive myself; I shall never be able to forget that I have done it.’ ‘Ah,’ said I, ‘God only has medicine for that sore; God has the balm for the wounded conscience: he can not only reconcile us to himself, but he can reconcile us to ourselves.’ I want you to see that all the punishment you undergo here

won't make you a whit less guilty. One of you has been guilty of assault, another has been guilty of robbery, another has been guilty of forgery. All that you suffer here cannot make you forget that you have done these things. Guilt cannot atone for guilt; a criminal cannot make peace for a criminal. There was a boy once who was very wicked; and his father told him that for every fault he committed he would drive a nail in a post; and the post became full of nails. At last the boy turned over a new leaf,—he became better,—and the father proposed that for every act of excellence a nail should be taken out of the post; and this continued some time, till one day the father said, 'Jim, my lad, nearly all the nails are gone.' 'Ah,' said the boy, 'they are; but I can see the place where they were: we cannot get rid of the scars.' No, my friends, the scars of sin remain. No being in prison, no punishment, no time, can take the scars out,—the scars of sin in the soul. But Christ can do that. He can take the memory of sin from us. He destroys sin. This is his reconciliation; and you will find it so when you are able to say,—

My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While like a penitent I stand  
And there confess my sin.'

“For, you see, the FOURTH velvet letter is this: ‘God does not IMPUTE our trespasses to us’ when we are reconciled to him. How strange and amazing! The prosecutor would forgive the prisoner, but the prisoner will not forgive the prosecutor! The injurer fancies that he is injured! The murderer won’t forgive the murdered man! That is just your case before God. ‘Be ye reconciled to God.’ If you are reconciled to God, and God is reconciled to you, I am sure you will not be on bad terms with man. You will see so clearly that the worst place you can be in is far better than your deserts and deservings, that, so far from doing unjustly or unkindly to man, you will bear the unkindness of men towards you, because you have offended against God, and you will get back again to your Father’s palace,—to the old mansion; and you will be at peace; for *‘whosoever dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.’*”

## VIII.

## Like Velvet, Soft and Firm.

It has been often thought that persons like blind Amos, who take the world smoothly and act towards it lovingly, are weak and frail creatures, yielding and bending to every impression, and irresolute before all strong influences. But this is a great mistake; and one of Amos's favourite proverbs was, "Pliable boughs stand most storms." "*Act,*" said he, "*always on the velvet principle,—soft but firm.*"

It was very difficult to be angry with him, but it was a still more difficult thing to move him. He was no hair-splitter. He would right cheerfully and willingly yield a point or an impression, or acknowledge himself to be wrong; but in the matters by which he regulated his general conduct, in the great articles of his faith and the great outlines of his prac-

tice, he was a most resolute and unyielding man. "No," he would say: "*water is soft but unstable: you may drag any thing through it. We must be like velvet, soft but firm.*"

And several times in the course of his life Amos had his firmness tested. Once he worked for an ungodly man, who frequently wanted work done on the Sabbath. He had always allowed Amos to spend his day uninterrupted, without ever proposing to him what he knew must be a violation of his principle and practice. At last, however, he commanded his presence at the workshop on the Sabbath-day.

"You know, sir," said Amos, "it is impossible."

"Then," said he, "it is impossible for me to employ you on Monday."

"I am very sorry," said Amos. "The place suits me very well, and I hope I suit you very well; but we ought to obey God rather than man." And so he left. But early on Monday morning his master sent for him, and confessed that it was only a trial of his principles. On Amos's part there was not a single word to recall: he returned to his employment; but this incident did not diminish his faith in his velvet doctrine,—*soft but firm.*

And it was a constant doctrine of Amos's that it is a much *harder thing to forbear than to fight*,—*easier to revenge than to endure*. The depth of his character was not known. There is a strange disposition to suspect the man who walks in a plainer path than his neighbours. His neighbours could not bear his short sententious stories and wise and witty sayings. They felt his superiority, and determined to contest it. They knew his gentle life, and they systematically sought to do him an ill turn when the opportunity offered. They stole the apples from his little orchard. They drove the pigs at night into his little garden. If they saw him coming along the road, some of the more wild would set up a hymn in mockery. These were not pleasant occurrences, and some of them left Amos much poorer; but he walked unrepiningly along. It was many a time a sore grief to himself and his wife; but he suffered in silence.

These were Amos's worst days. His dinners were very scant and poor; but, like many other poor people, his wife aimed to provide something better than usual on the Sunday. Not far from his cottage was the home of one of the reprobates who had been his chief per-



secutor, and in the midst of his persecution his wife fell ill. Amos's wife was the only person near and willing to render the little necessary neighbourly offices; and, when the poor creature recovered, every day, and especially every Sunday, Amos cut off, and his wife ran in with, a nice morsel of dinner before they sat down to their own. At last the husband relented. He came to Amos with tears in his eyes.

"I'll tell you what it is," said he: "I've been more a brute than a man, and I can't do you much good now; but I'll say this, them that seek to injure you shall injure me first; and when the potato-digging comes on, I can give you two or three work-days in your garden, and I will."

But it was the last of the persecution. That night at prayer Amos said, "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.*" '*When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*' I think," said he to his wife, "we should thank God for our velvet lesson. It is best, although it is hardest, to be *soft and firm.*"

But this was before Amos became blind.

Afterwards, on one occasion, a wild young man in the neighbourhood, who knew that Amos was alone, entered his cottage, and, as he was aware that he usually had a few ten-dollar pieces in his little tin box, he came to demand them, and thought there would be very little difficulty in making Amos yield. He entered quietly, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"That isn't you, Melly," said Amos. No reply. "That is Tom Wilson," said Amos, relying confidently on his strange, instinctive senses. "What do you want? Why do you not speak?"

"I'll tell you what I want, old man," said the hardened reprobate. "I know you've got some money here, and I want it; and we all know your word's as good as your oath: so I must have you to promise that you will not say who has been here."

"Well, Tom, so it's come to this, has it, my poor lad? Eh! dear, dear! to think of it. Well, we are all of us born, and none of us buried: Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee?"

"Now, I say, old fellow, I'm not going to let you stand preaching there till somebody

comes in : so tip us your word, and out with the shiners."

"Why, Tom, do you really mean to say that you have the idea of robbing and murdering your old neighbour and teacher?" And the old man rolled his sightless eyes on the young sinner, who, perhaps, felt more the power of those lightless balls than if they had been alive with light.

"I will tell you this, certainly," said the old man, as composed as if he had been talking to a friend : "I will neither give you my money nor my word ; and, if you consult your own safety, you will be off from hence at once." The bully and the thief began to talk of his pistol, which was lying on the table, and his hand upon it ; but Amos laughed at this.

"Nonsense!" said he : "you are not the stuff murderers are made of, I think and hope. But you have to-night put a black spot on your soul, which many years will not wipe away. Your drinking and card-playing, Tom, have brought you to a terrible passage in your life." Tom became frantic ; he swore, he cursed. "Give me the money," he said. But Amos was wise enough to know that passion is the sign of conscious weakness, and he

acted on his knowledge, and he became proportionably calm and mild as Tom became furious. "No, no, my lad," said he, "I shall give you no money: if it were to save you, I would give it to you; if it could bless your mother, who wept and prayed for you so often when you were a little lad, I might do so; but I will give you no money to help you to hell. As to me,"—and I think I can see how the old man looked as he said it, so noble and strong in his hale old age,—"'I am not my own, I am bought with a price;' and if this is my Master's moment, I am ready to be offered. Ah, Tom, I would gladly give up my body to save your soul. God has not spared these hairs to become gray and to cover them with dishonour; and if I gave you money, or gave you my word, I should be a dishonoured coward, Tom. You see, as it is, I am the brave man, though old and blind, and you are the coward."

Tom began to sneak away. Old Amos heard the key put into the lock, and the door opening. He stepped to the door. "Now," said he, "stop a moment." Poor Tom was in fright; he thought an alarm and seizure were certain. But the hand of old Amos was kindly laid on his shoulder. "Now," said he, "you may de-

pend on me. I will mention to no one the black deed of this night; but let us pray together, and praise together. We have both cause for it. If I can help you, come to me to-morrow. 'I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, my God, in him will I trust.' He hath given his angels charge concerning us both: he hath saved you from the blacker sin, and me from death. And perhaps it may not be unnatural for you to recollect, Tom, that the victory will always be their's who are able, leaning on divine help, to be *soft and firm*."

The story oozed out principally through Tom himself. He had not kept his counsel in going, and his failure was noised among those who knew of the attempt. It was Amos himself who helped him to go abroad, where he commenced a new course of life and continues to this day. He too tells the story, but in the third person, and always winds up in praise of the undaunted old gray-haired man who was at once *soft and firm*.

## IX.

## Cotton Velvet.

AMOS BLAKE was an epicure in his sensation of touch. He preferred passing his fingers over an inch of silk velvet to passing them over yards of cotton velvet. I sometimes took him a piece of velvet in which I could not detect any difference, but he would often say, "Ah, my boy, *it's only cotton.*" It wanted the smooth, soft pile, to run his fingers over which was, to him, the truest luxury he had. This piece of fine velvet was every thing to Amos; it was what good wine or good eating are to some, or fine flowers to others; and he linked some of his moralities to this side of his taste, too, and would indulge himself in thoughts on the importance of having real things about us. Silk velvet was to him real velvet, and cotton velvet was only sham and counterfeit. He detected the difference by a

single touch, and a shade of disappointment passed over his features as he drew his hand away, and said, "*It is only cotton: it is not real, it is not real!*"

I often had the honour of taking Amos by the hand and walking with him to places he did not so well know, and I was sometimes greatly amused by speeches which *I* only heard and understood, for he had a hieroglyphical way, sometimes, of uttering his proverbs and his thoughts. Once, I remember, he was called to go to pray with a poor man who was very ill,—dying, indeed; and we were in the room together, when in swept Miss Buckham, in all the glory of silk and satin. She was a lady who had taken up the work of charity as a business, and followed it as such. I will not dare to say how much or how little she followed her pursuits with the genuine feelings of love; but she talked very loud, made a great noise, and inquired after the poor with great dignity and condescension. I saw that all this mock philanthropy was not very pleasant to Amos, of whom Miss Buckham took not the slightest notice; but, as she was sweeping out of the room with the same rustle with which she entered, I caught the half-spoken

words muttered to himself by Amos, "*Cotton velvet; cotton velvet.*"

Another time, as we were going along the road, some gentleman met us. I think by his appearance he must have been a clergyman,—he spoke to Amos so warmly.

"I have heard of you so often," he said, "I have quite longed to see you."

"I am usually at home, on Warley Common," said Amos.

"Oh! oh! you live there still, I believe, do you?"

"Yes, sir, I have lived there twenty years. I knew the house before I was blind; I can see it written in my mind's and heart's eye: I hope to die there."

"Yes, yes: it's a very pretty place, I dare say. I often wish you had a more comfortable home,—more lively and commodious and healthy."

"You honour me, sir, by thinking of me so often," said Amos, "but it would be indeed a misery to me if I had what you call a more comfortable home. A palace or a mansion would be to me as miserable as it would be to a bird to be compelled to live in either without a nest."



“Ah, well, well—yes—I dare say. Good-morning.” And away went the clergyman; while Amos, too, walked away, muttering, “*Cotton velvet; cotton velvet.*”

When Jim Miles lost his horse, a subscription was got up for him to buy another, as he was a worthy man; and Amos gave him something.

“Have you been to the Squire’s?” said Amos to Jim.

“Yes.”

“And did he give you any thing?”

“Why, no; but he said he was very sorry, and he hoped it would be made up, and he did not doubt it would.”

“Ay: I thought so,” said Amos. “*Cotton velvet; cotton velvet.*”

He was not misanthropic. He believed thoroughly in the reality of some men; but he had travelled far away from home, and seen a great deal of men and of the world, and he looked at things with a very clear and shrewd mind, although he had a sightless eye. He abominated all pretence, all seeming and sham. “What,” said he, “is the use of religion if it gives us only plated pewter? our life must be as gold tried in the fire.” “My

little children,' he would sometimes say, "let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth."

"BE REAL! BE REAL! I have travelled into large towns; and when, years ago, I went there and looked up at the shops, I thought, 'Why, the men who live here are princes; what riches there must be!' Sometimes I worked in their parlours, drawing-rooms, and bedrooms. There were such pictures,—such hangings,—such plate. There was a carriage at the door, perhaps, and such a staff of servants. I recollect just such a place: it was all splendour: a short time afterwards the owner of all came to nothing, and could not pay a tenth of his debts. It was all very splendid *cotton velvet*; there was no reality in the show. I went home that night so humbled, and yet so thankful! I looked round my little room, and blessed God that all there was indeed mine,—that, although I was a labourer, no one could say that I had ever set up for more than a labourer; and, as I and my wife kneeled down that night, I prayed that God would 'turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity,' and make and keep me true, honest and real.

“In religion I was always afraid of great professions. I always felt that I was safest with the very quiet members of our little church. A man cannot help his temperament. Some men must speak louder than others; some men have an eloquent tongue in preaching and prayer: a man cannot help that. He is no more to be blamed for it, nor praised for it, than for the colour of his hair, or his height. But what watchfulness it needs! How much it increases the probability of carelessness and inconsistency! All height is dangerous. I have heard men talk, when abroad, and found out such a difference at home that I have been frightened. Here, too, it seemed as if men had in religion an out-of-door and an in-door suit; and the out-of-door looked so fine to view, so gaudy, till I took it into my hands in their own houses; and then I was compelled to say that the two dresses were quite different,—that the Sunday and out-of-door dress was at best but cotton velvet, and the home dress scarcely so good as that.

“Oh, what tricks and adventures I have been compelled to notice, from my humble post of observation! On the occasion of the late election, one of the candidates called on

me to ask me to give him my vote. I should have given it to him if he had not called; but he expressed so much interest in my health, so much regard for my opinions, so much value for my good esteem, my garden was so pretty and my house so pleasant, that I could not repress some warm speeches.

“‘Why,’ said I, ‘you must surely forget I am an old man. I have been a day-labourer. I have accumulated a little money, and you have heard that I am an eccentric old man. I am so eccentric that I always think less of certain people at election-times than at any other. Forgive, my friend, a plain word from a poor, old, blind day-labourer. Let your robes *be of a substantial kind, and not of cotton velvet.*’ It was very much to his honour that he shook hands with me heartily, and, I fancy, walked thoughtfully away. It was a bold word I spoke; but I was indignant to think that he should suppose *me* to be bought by a few smooth words.

“When you grow up into life, you will find a word in common use,—the word ‘respectable;’ but you must not suppose that that always is respectable which is called so. Many people, with all their finery, are only as *fine*

*as a dung-heap stuck with primroses,*—‘*as elegant as a sow elegantly saddled.*’ I never could understand very well where the pleasure is of trying to make people believe our dress is of silk velvet, when we ourselves know it is only cotton. There may be a pleasure in persuading myself; but, if I cannot persuade or impose on myself, to what avail is it that I persuade or impose on all other people? No; say what they will, to me it’s cotton still. I have heard of ladies blazing at ball-rooms in false diamonds; painting their faces to appear to have a fine natural colour, which they had not; affecting a poor appetite in company, and eating in private like a plough-boy. I have heard of gentlemen wearing all sorts of falsehoods,—false breasts to their coats, false hair, false teeth, false eyes, false legs, and living in false style and keeping up false appearances. My dear young reader, all this may never be in your way; but you may recollect that all falsehood is falsehood, *and nothing is respectable but truth.* There is no plaiting nor painting; there it is reality. And is it not best to aim to feel that in all things? Perhaps there is no coward like the man who is living constantly in the fear of some expo-

sure,—who is constantly aiming to appear what he is not, and to move in society for which he is unfit. It is not pleasant for a man to feel, *Here they all suppose that I am a reel of silk, but I know that I am only a ball of cotton, after all.*

“There is no disgrace in any being poor or being ignorant, when we were born in the stations of life where poverty and ignorance are a birthright and heirloom; but to assume to be what we are not, that is disgraceful.

“On my mantel-shelf there stood for a long time a piece of rough Cornish granite, and near to it a piece of beautiful white marble; and one day I heard, as I thought, the granite and the marble quarrelling together. Granite said that he was of the very oldest family of the earth,—which was true enough. He said that he was far more beautiful than marble; that the finest pieces of statuary had been carved out of him; that he was more light and elegant; and a great many other very nonsensical things. Now, we all know that old granite is the best fellow in the world,—in his way; but his setting himself up for marble was truly ridiculous, and I heard marble take him down famously. He said, ‘For a bridge,

or a building, Mr. Granite, I give in to you, and for the oldness of your family I give in to you; but we each have our own world and work: you are a fine, hard-grained fellow, but you are not fit exactly to make a statue for Westminster Abbey. If you set up for what you are not, people will find fault with you for what you are. If you are true to what you are, people will not expect you to be what you are not.'

"All things have their place; plush and cotton velvet have their's, and they look very well at a distance, but they are not pleasant to feel. Whenever I meet with a very coarse and unkind man, I think of plush; whenever I meet with a hollow lover of appearances, I think of cotton; but whenever I meet with a true-hearted and real man, I think of silk velvet. Wear it long as you like, it is still silk. *Be real.*"

## X.

## Velvet in Armour.

“I ONCE,” said Amos, “saw a suit of armour, such as the warriors used to wear in the old time, and I could not but admire its ease as well as its strength. The whole of it was lined with velvet, soft and pleasant to the wearer, but without was the hard, shining, polished iron, or steel. It was velvet in armour, and, I thought, a fine image of that all-enduring, all-conquering, long-suffering patience which, like love, can bear all things, and hope all things, and endure all things. Patience has the two sides of virtue, softness and hardness,—as I said before, *velvet in armour*. It is ‘*in our patience*’ we ‘*possess our souls*.’ *We have need of patience*. How hard it is to learn the lesson, ‘*Your strength is to sit still*’! How easy life is to the patient man! on the contrary, how hard to the impatient



man! To the patient man, the trials of life are like a suit of velvet guarded by iron; to the impatient man, they are like the suit of iron without the velvet. We all have need of patience: it is the armour of life, and all weapons in one. Nothing seems to harm the patient man. He turns all harm to good, and out of his adversities he makes a ladder by which he mounts higher towards heaven.

“I knew an old woman, Peggy Morrison we called her, and I fancy nobody ever did see her put out of temper or ruffled in any way. Tell her what you would that seemed to be at all likely to grieve her, she always said, ‘*If we wait, we shall see.*’ She certainly fulfilled the apostolic injunction, she *judged nothing before the time.* ‘*If we wait, we shall see.*’ If you told her any story to any person’s disrepute, and wound it up, as would be very likely, with, ‘What do you think of *that*, Peggy?’ she replied, promptly, ‘*Ah, well, if we wait, we shall see.*’ When her child lay ill of the fever, she was in a sad way, for she loved the bairn very much; but, while the child was in pain, she was resigned; and when it died, and her eyes were streaming with tears, she still said, ‘*Well, if we wait, we shall see.*’ There are many things

we can only see when we are patient. The impatient man is like a farmer who sows his seed and expects a crop, but continues ploughing and disturbing the earth every month or week: the earth needs rest, if it is to put forth its growth; and we must allow our spirits to rest, if they are to see the meaning of their sorrows. A disquieted heart is like a turbid atmosphere, and it interferes with the clear vision of the best things.

“I know as well as anybody that *patience does not come by preaching about it*, but we cannot too often repeat to ourselves that we have ‘need of patience.’ I went to see old Tommy Long, the rich old man, who was so afraid to die. The doctor was there to see him too.

“‘Doctor,’ said he, ‘am I any better?’

“‘Yes, you are,’ said the doctor. ‘You ought to know it.’

“‘I cannot get up,’ said he.

“‘No; but you are better.’

“‘I don’t sleep much more.’

“‘No, but you do sleep more, and I say you are better. But I must get you to take another kind of medicine, that I have not sent you yet.’

“ ‘Why, what is that?’

“ ‘Patience. You’ll not get well at all if you do not *take more patience*. It is the best of all medicine, for it makes all other medicine effective.’

“ An impatient man is like one struggling to be free from the slip-noose of a rope, which in proportion to his struggles fastens more and more firmly and painfully upon him. It is in our exertions to escape that we feel more the painfulness of our bondage. We never so much need to fulfil the injunction to ‘*quit ourselves like men, and to be strong,*’ as when we are tempted to those struggles and impetuous impulses which show our restlessness of soul.

“ To exercise us in the school of patience is one end of our being here; for patience puts all our powers to the proof and the test. It tries our metal, as we say. But trials would be very differently borne if they were met in the spirit of John Collins. I was condoling with him the other day on his broken leg; and he said, ‘Well, there is one thing about *that* which is comforting: I never knew a man have his leg broken twice in the same place.’

“ Nor did I. Our misfortunes are not often

duplicates: we do not feel the second trial as we felt the first. The Spanish proverb says, '*It is not the stone's fault if a man fall over it twice;*' and an old divine says, '*We ought not to give God the trouble to scourge us twice with the same stick.*' Be consoled. The troubles of this year can never happen to you again. Every year brings its own winter; and all winters have not the same depth of snow. A stout heart conquers ill luck. If the shower falls, walk fast; and if you get wet through, there is one consolation,—that you cannot get any wetter. I have often talked off a grumbling fit by a score or two of proverbs like these.

“And I have often noticed this: the meekest spirits bear most. The most troublesome customer I ever visited was Tom Porgis, the soldier, when he was home here ill. He was what would be called a brave man, full of animal courage, but he had no passive virtues.

“‘Why,’ said he, ‘should I lie here like an old cow? I must get up;’ but he soon fell back again in his bed, weak and infirm. ‘I would not mind,’ said he, ‘going and having a bullet put through me, and have done with it; but to lie here like this!’ I tried to tell

him that endurance is the best bravery, but he could not understand that. I have often talked with advanced Christians who were almost as slow to believe what a great poet says,—that

‘They also serve who only stand and wait.’

Yet I have known a poor woman confined to her bed for sixteen years, and there she lay, unmurmuring and unrepining, her gentle spirit always enjoying peace; and, as I think of her now, she seems to be greater than the soldier, nobler and braver. Her meekness and gentleness seemed so strong and powerful that it was like *velvet in armour*.

“*We have need of patience.* Some men have attained to such a degree of patience—have preserved their minds in so perfect a state of calm, unbroken and collected—that it is quite amazing to us. There was once a great man named EPICETUS. In his early days he was a slave, and his master diverted himself with striking his leg with a stick. He said, ‘If you continue to give such heavy strokes, you’ll break my leg.’ His master broke his leg, and he only said, ‘Did I not tell you you would break my leg? and now, you see, you’ve done it.’ And this man, when he escaped

from slavery, became one of the greatest philosophers of the heathen world; but he lived in a plain cottage, to which there was no door, and the furniture of the very meanest kind. He used to study by a plain, iron lamp, and when it was stolen he said, 'I'll disappoint that thief if he should come again, for I will only have an earthen one;' yet, after his death, we are told that that very earthen lamp sold for seventy pounds, as a curiosity. I do not say that it is desirable to reach, or to attempt to reach, such a state of patient endurance as this. But it shows how far even heathen men were able to wear *velvet in armour*.

“*The value of patience depends on our power to feel.* I do not give much credit to a stone because it does not quarrel with me if I kick my foot against it. But when a sensitive mind is able to bear and to forbear, this moves my admiration. We have all read what Indians will endure at the stake,—how they will bear, and that too without a cry, pains, agonies and cruelties which but to mention them sickens the heart. And there are some spirits stretched out on the rack of this hard and unfeeling world, who endure in their

hearts the most cruel pains. Sometimes the world will persecute the more when they suppose the victim does most feel. Some persons enjoy the sight of a heart in torment: to them it is the same thing as the boys' amusement of sticking a cockchafer on a pin to hear its buzzing and to see its fluttering; and at such times we should become '*wearied and faint in our minds if we did not consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.*' But that recollection has the same effect on many as it had on Robert Hall, who, in his great affliction and pain, said, 'I have not complained, sir, and I won't complain.' And the uncomplaining, suffering soul is like *velvet in armour.*

"There is an old proverb which says, '*The world is his who has patience.*' A great man has said that '*The world is conquered by time, by faith and by energy.*' A rain-drop fell from the sky into the mouth of an oyster, and in the course of time it became a pearl; but *it had to wait.* A mulberry-leaf became a robe, adorning the form of a queen; but *it had to wait.* The waiting, persevering, patient man overcomes; and it was therefore of such a man that the Arab proverb said, '*If you*

*fling him into a river, he'll come up with a fish in his mouth.*' He'll use the very adversities and persecutions in such a way that they will be sure to do him good. We read of Christ that '*he learned obedience by the things which he suffered;*' and '*by his obedience he became the author of eternal life to them that are sanctified.*'

"In a village where I once spent some time of my life, lived a poor old body, very good, sensible, pious, but she would have her own way. And perhaps it was very well for her that she had enough to do to keep body and soul together, and to find food for two or three young mouths; for she was a widow. But I have seldom known any person take the troubles of life and the evil words of people more quietly than she did.

"'As to trouble,' said she, 'I've made up my mind to it; and what one makes up one's mind to, one manages to get over; and as to people, why, bless their dear silly souls, it's the best way many of them know of getting rid of their own troubles to be making troubles for their neighbours. Oh,' said she, 'they used to worret me fair out of my senses, I can tell you; but I's up-sides with 'em now.'



I always begin the morning with the knowledge that I'm to have something to fret me, or more than fret me. *I don't meet troubles half-way; but it's as well to be on the lookout.* We don't live far from the devil, and he's always flinging stones over in poor bodies' gardens, and one *may* light on our head. So I e'en every morning go to the good Lord and say, "Thou hast given me another day's work to do, and thou must e'en give me strength to do it with." I talk to him like that; and he always hears me and gives me just what I want. Then, for the people in the world, I used to be always having a lot of chattering, story-telling bodies coming in, and they did a world of mischief to my soul. But one night I just up and told the Lord how uncomfortable it made me, and I said, "You must, Lord, put a stop to these bodies." And he did; for the next day when they came in with their stories I was about my ironing, and I went and got the Bible and put it down, and said, "Now you read a chapter out of that;" and the next I told to do the same, and the next too. Many a precious chapter I got read to me that way. I did that. Well, you see, lots on 'em stayed away after that, and we used to get on very

blessedly indeed. Then, you see, I had no opportunity of hearing what any of them said about me. I wouldn't hear it. But, bless you, I knew they talked, and I made that a matter for the Lord, too; for we be poor crusty creatures, and a little puts us out. But I had grace given me to think it was all well. *As to their talking, it couldn't eat me, nor drink me, nor give me the small-pox nor the fever.* I won't say but I felt a little cross at first, and I know that I be a cross-grained and crooked bit of stick; but then the Lord knows it too, and he makes great allowances for me. I tried to do my work so that there should be no grumbling about it, and, if there was grumbling, I said to myself, "Now, Peggy, thou must mind and take care to do it better;" and now it's a long time since I had any thing without to disturb my peace. In the kingdom of heaven there is not a more cross-grained piece of stuff than I am, and I see that the Lord has led me in just the way: he has led me, to teach me the lessons he only can teach.' Now, do you not think that simplicity, gentleness and endurance, all show you what I mean by **VELVET IN ARMOUR,—GENTLENESS CASED IN ENDURANCE?**"

## XI.

## Take Care of the Helm.

“VERY often,” said Amos, “when I have been on the water in a boat, I have heard, as you may have heard, the man at the oar say to the man steering, ‘*Mind your helm.*’ On board ships and steamboats, you often see the inscription up, ‘Passengers not allowed to talk to the man at the helm.’ So much depends on steady and careful steering. A careless helmsman might very soon lose a ship; and I remember once being on a river in a rough wind: we got into a great difficulty and dilemma through a little carelessness in steering. We got the boat aground; and how long we had to wait, and to wait in very unpleasant circumstances, because the foolish man did not take care of his helm! And yet the helm seems the most easily managed of any part of the vessel. One is inclined to

say, 'Well, if a man fail there, it is perfect carelessness, and nothing short of it.' He has not to do so much; it is no toilsome work, but needs the attentive, diligent eye. *It needs the silent tongue.* Sometimes more and sometimes less exertion is needed, but what is especially needed is care. And in rough seas or calm rivers, as the dangerous rock may lurk or the shallow spread below, the good sailor will keep his weather-eye open, and '*mind his helm.*'

"We are all sailors," said Amos, "and all the success of the voyage depends on our taking care of the helm. I have known many a ship lost by the helmsman. I knew one especially: it had gone many a voyage, but it had always met with some disaster, and always through the helmsman. The vessel had always been light and well rigged, sails all complete and stout, flags and pennants flying. Away she went before the breeze. But she had not been at sea long before a *spark from the helmsman set a sail on fire*; the ship was in flames very soon. To be sure, she was saved, but had to put in again to harbour to be refitted and re-rigged. Well, away she went again, and this time all went very well till the

helmsman, a stupid fellow, *drove her right among some rocks*: there she lay aground for a long time, but again she was saved, and once more was sea-worthy. But again she was coasting, and was run by the helmsman *right upon some icebergs*, and there she might have been lost, and was saved by no arrangement of her own, but by a friendly hand from a neighbouring ship. Lost three times by the same helmsman! *Take care of the tongue. It is the helmsman of the soul.*

“A word from the tongue will set all *the passions in a blaze*; a word from the tongue will wreck a craft among *the rocks of thoughtlessness*; a word from the tongue will dash the human vessel among *the icebergs of unkindness*. The tongue is the helm; take care of the tongue. ‘*Whoso offendeth not in word, the same is a perfect man.*’ When we advance a little into life, we find that the tongue of man creates nearly all the mischief of the world. The man who is able to command his tongue is able to command his whole body, and is able to command other people too.

“Is it not wonderful to notice that so large a number of proverbs of all nations should be about the tongue? It shows how much atten-

tion it has needed. It is of no use to be soft and kind and gentle in disposition, and generous in pocket, and firm and powerful in character, if you cannot control your tongue. A man's tongue makes him or unmakes him far more than he thinks; and, indeed, it represents and reveals the man. *'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;'* for every word, you know, is an action, and none the less because its deeds cannot always be clearly seen.

“In a word, if you would walk upon velvet, take care of your tongue. *Many a man finds fault with his hard path who has spit stones from his own teeth. Let a man be born among roses, a foolish tongue may turn them all into nettles. Rue and thyme both grow in one garden. A good tongue is a good weapon. Fair words break no bones, but foul ones many a one. Good words cool more than cold water. To cast oil in the fire is not the way to quench it. Take care of the first words. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water. Evil words beget evil words, till at last they come to generations.*

“Oh, the tongue! the tongue! the tongue! What shall be done unto thee, thou false

tongue? Hollowness and deceit are as bad as slander, or railing, or worse. Some tongues are always on the look-out for an equivocation; they cannot give a direct or plain answer. Their owners do not so much use them, as fence with them, and play off on their neighbour an ingenious double-dealing in words. All the words of such people are like pieces of money: they have two sides, and one is as good as the other, and neither good for much, for it is all brass or copper coin. Whenever they give you a reply, you can almost always hear the words chuckling in their throat, to think how shrewdly they have imposed on you. To such persons a yea is never yea, nor is a nay, nay. Learn to hate all two-faced words. Life has been said by some people to be like the waterman's craft, 'Rowing one way and looking another.' That is very well, for we have not only to act for the present moment, but to look right ahead into the future. But we must not say one thing and mean another; it is our using too many words which makes us insincere. If we thought before we spoke, we should often live nearer to honesty.

*"Take care of the helm.* Every helm may

be steered to the right or to the left. The two things constantly to be borne in mind in the government of the tongue are *kindness* and *sincerity*. Virtues carried to extremes become vices. If you are too gentle, soft and yielding with the tongue, there is danger of insincerity; if too vehement, too rapid, forcible, inconsiderate, you become unkind. There is a golden mean, if we can find it, so that the tongue may become a temple of purity and meekness, of love and truth.

“I am sure that the tongue does more to keep the world in turmoil than the sword. I am sure we shall never tread on velvet till people look after their tongues. Of course, control the tongue as we may, still there will be many vices left behind; but a busy tongue is the parent of much mischief. You remember Lizzy Morris, as innocent and pure and beautiful a girl as any in our village. Why was she obliged to leave? Because Mrs. Scudder, the dirty charwoman, began rolling some senseless story through the village. How was it that Fanny Burgess could find no work to support herself or her mother? Because some unkind tongues began repeating the old, worn-out story against her. How was it that



Nicholson, the carpenter, lost his work? Because some busybody told his master that he had been soliciting work elsewhere; and the falsehood was not found out until the poor fellow had gone away to find work two hundred miles off. What keeps scores of people constantly by the ears? Why, some two or three venomous old news-mongers, who go about, like industrious old apostles of mischief, from house to house. I have often thought, when I have heard of a strait-waistcoat for lunatics, and a lunatic asylum, *what a glorious thing it would be if there were a tongue asylum*, and some sort of restraint for that most mischievous little piece of red machinery. If a man runs out of his house and breaks a window, he is put into an asylum, and watch and ward kept over him; but if an old gentleman or lady of the best intentions invites a few neighbours to tea, and proceeds to tear in pieces half the characters in the neighbourhood, or if they go from house to house deliberately to exercise their gifts and graces of malice in throwing poor men out of work, or whispering suspicions into the ears of the unsuspecting, or breathing a blight upon fair names, it is all thought to be right

and natural and innocent enough. We have lunatic asylums, asylums for the deaf, for consumptives, for the eyes, for the ears; but I have groaned for *some hospital for diseased tongues*,—tongues that are troubled with perpetual and mischievous motion. What a benefactor to his race would he be who should found such a hospital and keep it full!

“Take care of *your* tongue. Never mind anybody else’s tongue. Let others take care of *their’s*,—*you* take care of *your’s*. I say this because most people are more anxious about their neighbours’ tongues than about their own. You take care of *your* hands and *your* face: why not take care of *your* tongue? You don’t trouble yourself much with your neighbours’ hands or faces: let their tongues alone too. And if you find (as probably you will) that they do not attend to the health of their’s, and they meddle with the tongues of other people, that will only be another argument why you should devote more attention to your’s. Take care of your *tongue*: *you have but one tongue to take care of: two feet, two eyes, two hands, even nostrils, a double pair of nerves I am told,—but only one tongue, and that is the cause of as much trouble to everybody as an*

unbroken colt. Take care that your tongue does not become your master: make it your servant. Take care that it does not turn coward. Teach it when to speak, what to speak, and how to speak. *'Life and death are in the power of our tongue.'* *'Blessing and cursing are in the power of the tongue.'* Pure fountains and black pools, and the will and the mind preside over all. Take care of your tongue!

“How blessed is the privilege of those dear ones who live so near to the Lord, that, when the breath of injurious slander has gone over them, they can sit still, or pay back the false coin of the world's unkindness with words of gentleness and love! *'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'* And why may not this be? *The wind that shakes the rose only diffuses its fragrance.* The insect that crawls upon its beautiful leaves may seem to impair it, but a shower washes the insect away, and leaves the rose a rose still. And is it not very sweet to know that the loving heart has a fountain of sweetness in itself, which the winds of unkindness cannot shake, nor the showers and storms of slander wash away? *'God avenges his own elect,'* and every slight practised on them will

be found, in the long run, to have been practised on him. For, through all time, beautiful things *are* beautiful things, and evil things *are* evil things.

“A violet and a nettle were growing on the same bank one spring day, when the sun was shining very brightly and some of the sweetest breezes were abroad. The violet was rather out of sight, but the nettle had seen her many times, though he had never before spoken to her. ‘Good-morning, ma’am,’ said he. ‘Good-morning, Mr. Nettle,’ sweetly replied the violet. ‘I wouldn’t give much for your chance if we have many such days as this. There will be some walkers-out who will be wending their way up here, and you will have a short time:—you may take my word for it.’ So impudently spoke the nettle, like a great coarse thing as he was. ‘Alas!’ said the violet, ‘it may be so, but I hope not: I would rather stay here a little while longer and enjoy the sunshine and breeze.’ ‘Ah, my lady,’ said the nettle, ‘you see that’s just the way the world treats you, poor things, while it respects me. Catch them gathering me! no, no; they know a trick worth two of that. If they touch me I give them something to remem-

ber. And if you had a good sharp sting or two they'd let you be where you are, I'll be bound.'

“‘Perhaps so,’ said the violet, ‘and yet I'd rather be as I am, without the sting; for, you see, *if they gather me, it's because they love me; and if they let you alone, it's not because they love you so much.* I do not want to be taken away from the pleasant hedge; but they will perhaps gather me to carry me to some sick-room,—or a lover will give me as a present to his mistress, and she will prize me, and make me a book-mark, where, perhaps, I may stay for generations, to be looked at by her grandchildren. They'll never treat you with so much respect, Mr. Nettle. And if I were gathered you would be sorry: you would not be able to talk to Tom Dockleaf as you do to me; and you know you dearly like to smell my breath. I do not wish to be impudent, but I know that you are all the sweeter for being in my neighbourhood,—and you know it too; don't you, Mr. Nettle?’

“He had no time to reply, for a labourer came by with a scythe and cut down Mr. Nettle and Tom Dockleaf too; and the poor

violet was left in safety to herself in the beautiful light and cool breath of heaven alone. 'Yes,' said she to herself, '*if they injure us, it is better to feel that we have neither the disposition nor the power to injure them.*'



## XII.

*The Good Giant and his Velvet Globes.*

“I ONCE read a story that in a period of which I shall leave you to guess, and in a part of the world which I shall leave you to find out, there lived a benevolent giant. He was a most wonderful being. I cannot tell you what he had not attempted to do; and he was so powerful that there were very few things he attempted which he did not perform. He took delight in doing good to other people, but he seldom thought of doing any good for himself in particular. For instance: he lived himself in a very poor little cottage, so low that he—tall fellow that he was—could scarcely put his head into it. But only a few steps from his cottage he built beautiful palaces for people to live in who could not build a house for themselves; and he laid out gardens and planted

trees; and he made bricks, and he hewed stones, and he carved marble, and whatever he wanted he used to get, for he had a wonder-working hammer, and when he wanted any thing he used to rap on the ground with his hammer, and instantly the ground opened and hundreds of little fairy creatures came and laid what he demanded at his feet! If he wanted iron, he gave a knock, and the creatures came out of the fiery furnace and brought bar after bar. If he wanted gold, he gave a knock, and they came again and brought nugget after nugget. And it was just the same if he wanted coals, or copper, or lead; and at last, whenever any thing was wanted, the people of the country said, 'Well, we must go and ask the good giant;' and ten to one but he gave it to them. He never cared about having the things he made himself. But with his loud laughter he shook the hills about him, and the people ceased to fear the good giant; and some, finding that he did not think of himself, began to treat him very badly; but still the good giant laughed Ho! ho! ho! ho! and so long as he saw his merry miners at work, and knew that his palaces were building, and his looms going, and his silk and



cloth and cotton spinning, he did not care for much beside. I wonder if you can tell me the name of the good giant?

“Well, I could really spin out quite a long story about him, but I am not going to do so. I am only going to tell you of three pairs of velvet gloves the good giant kept constantly by him. When people stole his property, as they did very often, when those weak little creatures whom the giant (had he been disposed) could have eaten before breakfast and thought nothing of it, came crowing about him, he put on a pair of velvet gloves, and instantly it seemed as if all the wrinkles were smoothed out of his face, and he looked as bright and sunny as if he owned all the good things he had made. When the work the giant had to do seemed hard, he put on another pair of velvet gloves; for sometimes his way and his work lay very much among thorns and nettles and rough rocks. ‘But,’ said he, ‘never mind: we must keep at it: nettles to-day and velvet to-morrow.’ And when people spoke to him, as they often did, rather roughly, he always drew on the velvet gloves before he replied. ‘It gives one time to cool and to think.’ And then, when the gloves were on, why,

although he was a rough giant, you would scarcely believe it, but his words and his actions became so soft and gentlemanly that you would think, instead of the tools of labour, he had been all his life studying how to behave himself; and it was beautiful to see this great, good giant smiling as a child, industrious as a bee, and polite as a gentleman, when he drew on his velvet gloves.

“I want you to tell me the name of the good giant; and, if you cannot tell me soon, I shall tell you his name.

“What! do you not know his name, when you have lived near him so long? Why, his name is GIANT INDUSTRY. And let me tell you that an acquaintance with that fine, benevolent old uncle quite brightens, softens and sweetens life. Industry—honest, patient, truthful, powerful Industry—often wears a suit of velvet over his hard limbs, while Laziness wears a suit of horsehair. To industry the hours and the moments spin along so lightly that there is always something to do,—and that which comes to us every day is so sweet and easy at last. Many a man has thought how happy he would be if he were only able to retire from business; then he would take

his pleasure. Alas! he has found it the very reverse: retiring from business was retiring from pleasure,—as the candle-merchant found, who took a great house in the country and sold his business, and then had to come to his successor and beg him to allow him to go into the candle-works to do a day's work, just to keep his mind happy, from time to time. Yes, an acquaintance with the good Giant Industry greatly smooths life.

“Once, a great many years ago, TWO PLOUGHSHARES were made by the same blacksmith, in the same smithy, from the same kind of iron, and they were bought by the same farmer. He took one into instant employment, but he left the other unemployed for twelve months in a barn, till the poor thing got covered with rust. At last the farmer had occasion for another ploughshare: so he drew it forth from its laziness and obscurity, and sent it into the field where it met its old fellow-ploughshare. ‘Why,’ said the lazy one, ‘what has kept you so bright? I declare, I am quite ashamed to be seen.’ ‘Ah!’ said the bright ploughshare, ‘it’s labour and exercise that has kept me bright: your rest and idleness have been injurious to you. But when you have been driven

a few times through the hard earth, you'll lose your rust and become bright and beautiful too like me.' It is exercise, in any way, which preserves the beauty, the grace and polish of life, and we are very silly when we fancy that we are better or greater than other people because we have not so much to do. Some of the most beautiful things derive their beauty from labour. The good giant comes and breathes on them and makes them beautiful.

"Once upon a time, a SILKWORM was crawling over a rich VELVET CUSHION. The cushion heaved with indignation.

"'How dare you, you unsightly creature, come where I am?' said the cushion, blushing crimson: 'you forget yourself very strangely. Get off with you!'

"'No,' said the silkworm, 'I do not intend to stay here long, and when you spoke I was crawling away as fast as I could; but I was wondering that all your brightness and softness should come out of a little insect like me. Oh, Mr. Cushion, it is you who forget yourself. Do you not know that if there were no silkworms there would be no velvet cushions?'

You ought not to grudge me a look at the beauty which you owe to me.'

"BUT DO NOT FORGET THE GIANT'S VELVET GLOVES; and if you can get them and will wear them, why, in the long run, you will conquer the world. THE FIRST PAIR IS CHEERFULNESS. Sad would be the lot of the labourer without a cheerful heart and a cheerful face;—cheerfulness conquers what nothing else will. Who can stand against the happy, open face of a cheerful-hearted man? While Sadness and Melancholy go glowering over the world, Cheerfulness takes trouble by the horns,—mounts on the back of it very often, and makes it bear him instead of allowing it to trample him in the dust. You *must* be industrious to keep yourself alive: you cannot live and do nothing. Be cheerful as well;—if the way is long, sing, and it will lighten the way; if the showers are heavy, sing, and banish care. Cheerfulness is much more a matter of the will and determination than people seem to think. All cannot be equally cheerful, but none need be cheerless. *A merry heart does good like a medicine.* You must go to the despairing, then, and say, '*Draw on your velvet gloves.*'

“There is another pair:—PRUDENCE, including foresight and thrift. Draw on your velvet gloves. The eye that looks at to-morrow wins to-day. That renouncing of the present indulgence for the future gratification is the great difficulty of life. It seems hard to do it: in reality it is easy. The giant lived as happily in his poor cottage as those whom he had enabled to live in their palaces at ease. One of the sad sights of Vanity Fair is to behold the old man in the workhouse who flaunted through the city in his youth in improvident silks and broadcloths. Poor fellow, he did not draw on his velvet gloves!

“No, there are few who are able to bear a present hardship for a future good. If they would walk through a few nettles to-day, they might lie on a couch of velvet to-morrow, and for their whole life; but they prefer to enjoy the velvet couch to-day, and wake up to-morrow and walk all their life through the nettles. A little while since, the relatives of poor old Mr. Harley came in a train of black carriages to commit his poor body to the dust. He was a fool all his life, that poor old Harley. With him it was always *velvet to-day and nettles to-morrow*. Some remember very well

when his rich brother was dying, he knew poor Harley to be in debt and to be a great fool, and he sent for him to his bedside and told him so. He told him that he wished to leave him several thousand dollars, but he would not leave it to pay his debts. He said, 'Here are five hundred dollars: go and see the lawyer; this will carry you safely through all your expenses of law, and when I die—which will be, I know, in a day or two—you will be independent.' The poor silly man took the money, but, instead of going to a lawyer and having his expected inheritance protected from his creditors, he squandered the money his brother had given him, and when, in a few days, he found his brother was dead, and he the heir to all his property, he found, too, that his creditors came, as his brother had prophesied, and seized the whole. They benefited by his brother's will, but the purpose of the will was frustrated, and he has been ever since a beggar in his family. Thus, *he had velvet for a day, and nettles for a lifetime.*

"Ah! my sands are running out; my words are almost gone! I have little more to say, but I must see you try on the giant's third pair of gloves,—GOOD MANNERS. Some people

will say, 'What! industry polite? industry well-behaved?' Of course. Why not? Politeness should not belong to anybody in particular, but to everybody in general; and it is a beautiful sight to see a working-man a polite and well-behaved man. There are people who pride themselves on a coarse kind of behaviour:—'You know me, sir: it's my way.' Yes, I know it's your way, but I don't like it any the more for that. No man has a right to behave badly; no man has a right to violate good manners by inattention to the little deficiencies of life. He should observe them for the comfort and convenience of others. *Good manners are like velvet gloves.* They are very agreeable. Then why not use them? Good manners are as cheap as bad. How much would it cost anybody to be polite, kind, affable and amiable? There is an old proverb which says, '*You have good manners, but you never carry them about you;*' and another says, '*You have good manners, but you have no use for them.*' 'Good words cost no more than bad.' Some people think that politeness is not in the roll of Christian duties; but it is. 'Be courteous' is as much a divine command as 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it



holy.' And I know that discourteous persons are always uncomfortable themselves:—

'They lie like a hedgehog turn'd up the wrong way,  
Tormenting themselves with the prickles.'

And, in one word, what is all politeness? And the truest and highest politeness? It is only this: thinking less of ourselves and more of others. If we could only keep that constantly in our memory and our wish, we should always be acting on some one or other of the beautiful velvet principles,—of love, and kindness, and self-denial.

“‘There is a very pretty old fable which says that the sheep was doomed to suffer so much from other animals that she went to the gods and besought them to help her in her misery and to grant some defence.

“‘What shall I do to thee?’ said one of the gods. ‘I will give to thee the tooth of the tiger and the claw of the vulture.’

“‘Oh, no,’ said the sheep: ‘I do not wish to be thought to be like those cruel beasts of prey.’

“‘Well, then, I will infuse poison into thy tongue, and thou shalt communicate it to all that thou dost touch with thy spittle.’

“‘Alas! let it not be so,’ said the gentle

sheep. 'I would not be like one of the terrible serpent race, everywhere hated.'

"'Then,' said the god, 'I will give horns to thy forehead, and strength to thy neck.'

"'Oh, not so, not so: I might be disposed to butt like the he-goat.'

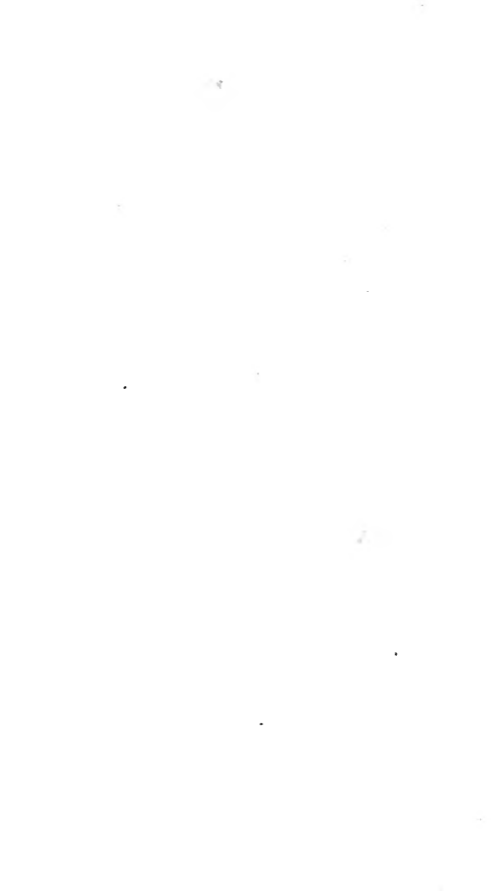
"'And yet,' said the god, 'you must be able to injure others if others are to be fearful of injuring you.'

"'Must I?' sighed the sheep. 'Then let me be as I am: the power to do injury might create the desire, and it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong.' So the god blessed the loving sheep, and the sheep forgot to complain.

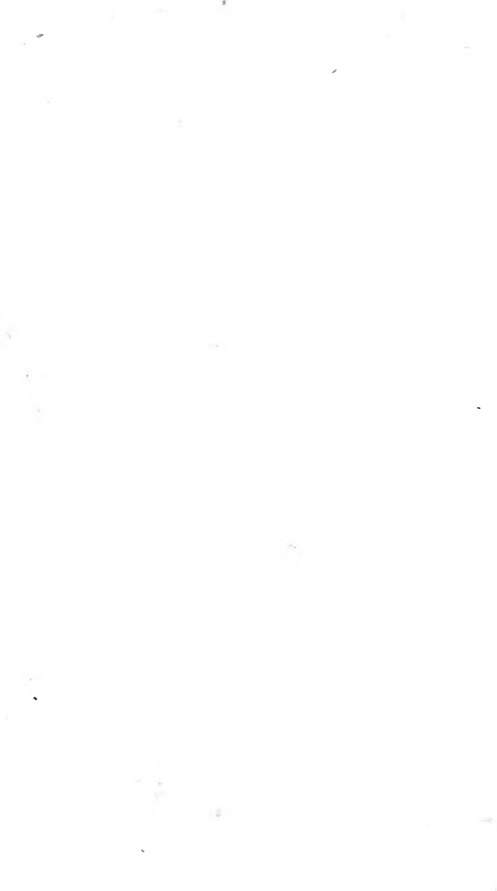
"But we have no need of a fable to instruct us while we have the pure, clear light of divine truth. The precepts of the holy gospel, sublimely illustrated in the life, sufferings and death of the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, teach us all our social duties. He that is influenced by the good Spirit of God is sure to produce the fruits of the Spirit, among which are love, peace, gentleness, meekness, and temperance."

THE END.









40

